



Bioeconomy in the Danube Region - Cross-clustering partnership for boosting eco-innovation by developing a joint bio-based value-added network

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The Czech Hemp Cluster launched

On initiative of the National Cluster Association (NCA), the international DanuBioValNet project has gained a new bioeconomy focus, which is the hemp industry value chain. Hemp is one of the fastest growing crops and it has a huge potential in different spheres of production due to the fact that almost a whole plant can be exploited. It can be used in medicine, pharmacy, cosmetics as well as in construction, paper, plastics, textile and other industries. At the same time, the Danube countries have suitable climate conditions for the hemp growing. That is why the hemp-based bioeconomy topic has been included in the DanuBioValNet project besides phytopharma, biopackaging and eco-construction with the vision to create and expand the opportunities for the value-added activities associated with the hemp industry.

The Hemp Cluster Initiative meeting took place in Prague on 19 February 2018, attended by the representatives of hemp growers, hemp businesses as well as universities and research institutes from across the Czech Republic. Pavla Bruskova, the President of the NCA, introduced the participants the cluster concept as a tool for regional development and pointed out the opportunities and possibilities of cooperation among stakeholders from the hemp industry



within the whole Danube Region. The barriers of the development of the hemp industry in the Czech Republic were defined during a very lively discussion that will serve the formulation of the strategic objectives of the hemp cluster development. A Steering Group was set up to co-ordinate further meetings and concrete steps for the official registration of the "CzechHemp" cluster organisation.

Author: National Cluster Association – Czech Republic

New cluster services training in Sofia

Over 30 cluster managers and cluster policy stakeholders from several countries covering a geographic area stretching from Georgia to the UK participated in the training dedicated to the development of new cluster services, organised by the DTP Project "DanuBioValNet" in Sofia on the 19 March in the eve of the European TCI Conference 2018.



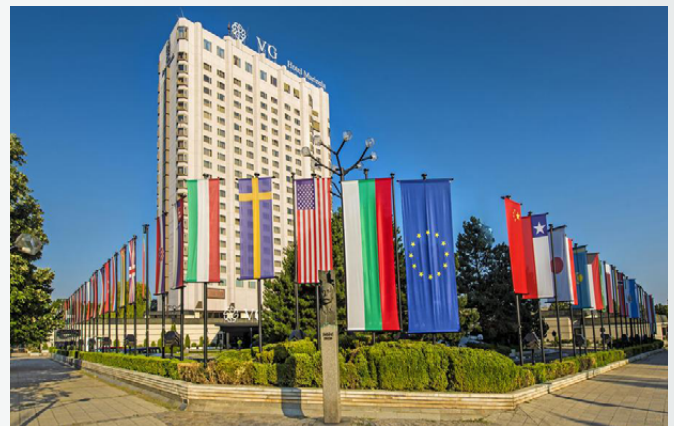
The rationale behind is the fact that the establishment of cross-clustering partnerships in order to boost eco-innovation and to develop a joint biobased value-added network in the Danube Region requires the development of new cluster services as a key element in supporting cluster members in becoming more innovative and more competitive in the context of the new industrial value chains and in particular in the biobased industry.

The best practice examples from Germany, Austria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria covering a wide range of topics such as management, inter- and intra-cluster networking, innovation, marketing and internationalisation have been presented only to stir up a vivid discussion which led to the identification of several more ones.



The discussion has been pursued against a wider assistance on the internationalisation panel of the TCI Conference on 22 March, moderated and conducted by the DanuBioValNet team. As location, culture and size have been identified as main factors influencing internationalisation, the Bulgarian Furniture Cluster (BFC) and the Romanian ASTRICO Nord East textile cluster have presented ways of turning the experience of traditional sectors into global opportunities via the identification of innovative niches (smart re-furnishing - BFC) and/or increasing the length of the value chain in the cluster (centralized acquisition and marketing system - ASTRICO NE).

Author: Romanian Cluster Association, Romania



Phytopharma Roadmapping Workshop



On 17 April 2018, more than 30 experts from the phytopharmaceutical sector in the Danube Region gathered on the workshop in Belgrade. The participants had the opportunity to discuss technological, market, policy and social-economic challenges related to the **phytopharma industry**. The discussion was conducted in 3 parallel sessions devoted



to the selected topics: "Gaps in Provision of Services" related to phytopharma, elaborated on current gaps and future needs for the phytopharmaceutical sector, session moderated by Darja Osvald; "Missing Links and Knowledge Development" addressed the need of supporting R&D infrastructure for farmers & cultivators, and also for high tech applications, session moderated by Zorica Marić. The linkages among business networks were also discussed within this session; "Future Trends and Upcoming Legislation"

referred to the need of understanding the business environment and future perspectives, session moderated by Ana Aleksić Mirić.



Following the impulse given by the experts from Baden-Württemberg, Bulgaria and Serbia, through guided facilitation, the information and ideas from the "real world" were taken. Activities, time frame and the responsible person/authority were identified through facilitation process for each of the topics. The findings and recommendations will



be the inputs for the strategic actions that will support the creation and expansion of opportunities for value-added activities associated with the phytopharma value chain in the Danube Region.

Author: Innovation Center of Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, Belgrade, Serbia

Eco-construction Roadmapping Workshop

On Friday 20 April 2018, the Roadmapping Workshop on Eco-construction took place in Linz, Upper Austria. The workshop was organized by the Austrian Cleantech Cluster as part of the DanuBioValNet project. The workshop brought together industry, academia, market experts, cluster managers and policymakers from Germany, Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania and other Danube countries to discuss future trends and upcoming legislation related to **wood construction industry**.



After a short welcome speech and introduction of the DanuBioValNet project, Klaus Madlmair from Business Upper Austria introduced the participants to the Upper Austria business location. The programme of the event continued with a lecture of Mr Vervoort, CEI-Bois – European Confederation of Woodworking Industries, on the subject of *Wood in construction: EU issues at a glance*. Then the Interreg Foresda project was presented by Pro Wood Cluster from Romania and the "Lukas Lang Building Technologies" company, which deals with the construction of wooden houses, was promoted by Mr Szymoniuk. Afterwards, the participants were divided into two working groups



to discuss in breakout sessions. The first group dealt with the topic of *Gaps in providing well-trained workforce - Qualification and R&D Programmes* with Ms. Müller from the University of the Arts, acting as input provider. The second group discussed on the *Regulations and incentives affecting market development and what measures are needed for a prosperous market development*. This group was led by Mr. Pretterhofer from Wood Cluster Styria who gave the inputs.

The discussions addressed gaps in the provision of services related to the wood construction sector and missing linkages associated with knowledge development. The objective was to gain insight into trends that will impact products and markets as well as opportunities and challenges for clusters active in the industry. The workshop discussions helped to inform the policy-makers on how to improve conditions that currently hamper competitiveness and exploitation of opportunities along the wood construction value chains in the region.

Author: Business Upper Austria - OÖ Wirtschaftsagentur GmbH, Austria

Awareness and Hemp Roadmapping Workshops

The National Cluster Association (NCA) hosted the awareness workshop on bioeconomy and hemp industry roadmapping workshop in Prague on 26 April 2018. One of the roads towards the strengthening of the role of bio-based industries has been laid out by The European Commission Bioeconomic Strategy. The EU supports seed treatment, cultivation and processing of crops with a wide use and ambition to replace non-renewable resources, especially crude oil. Based on the NCA initiative, the discussion was opened within the DanuBioValNet project on the topic of the hemp use as a multi-functional, broadly applicable crop of the future.

The roadmapping workshop, visited by Austrian, Croatian, Czech, Serbian and Slovak experts and project partners, stipulated the priorities leading towards a higher use of hemp as one of the strategic bioeconomic feedstocks. The topics included the need of education and awareness building on the role of hemp in different industries based



on scientific results, formation of the hemp clusters in the Danube Region and their cross-sectoral and cross-regional cooperation, harmonisation of legal regulations and standardisation of the hemp industry along its value chain in the EU.

Author: National Cluster Association – Czech Republic

The Bioeconomy in the World

Lego is making plant-based plastic pieces

Lego has started making their building pieces more sustainable. The toy company announced that their botanical selections, such as leaves, bushes, and trees, will be made from **plant-based plastic**. Production has already started and they should be released later this year.



The plant-based plastic is sourced from sugarcane through a partnership with the World Wildlife Fund and its initiative, the Bioplastic Feedstock Alliance. Even though it's from sugarcane, this plastic still has polyethylene material that makes it soft and flexible. All sustainable products still go

through rigorous testing that conventional plastic bricks do. Using plant-based plastic is part of the Lego's commitment to transition toward sustainable material for their standard products and packaging by 2030. Back in 2012, they explored ways to become more sustainable and invested heavily into the research three years later. The company is also targeting zero waste in their operations.

Source:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/lego-is-going-eco-friendly-for-kids-with-plant-based-plastic-pieces-this-year>

Tesco's plans on sustainable packaging

The British multinational grocery and general merchandise retailer, Tesco, wants to make all of its packaging fully recyclable or compostable by 2025, with all the paper and cardboard used being 100% sustainable within the same time frame. By 2025, Tesco also hopes to reduce packaging weight by half from the levels used in 2007. So far, Tesco has removed polystyrene from fish packaging and replaced it with more environmentally friendly plastic.

Source: [https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/](https://inews.co.uk/news/uk/supermarkets-plan-reduce-plastic-pointless-packaging/)

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Next activities and events

17 May 2018 - New cluster services training in Cluj, Romania

24 - 25 May 2018 - Roadmapping Workshop on Biobased Packaging, Ljubljana, Slovenia

4 - 5 June 2018 - New cluster services training in Opatija, Croatia

More info about news and events:

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/approved-projects/danubiovalnet/news>

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