



# CEE2ACT

Empowering the Central and Eastern European  
Countries to Develop Bioeconomy Strategies  
and Action Plans

Stakeholder Engagement Report: Meetings and Collaborative Efforts  
(December 2022, May-June 2023)



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This report provides a comprehensive overview of the meetings, stakeholders, and their views, offering valuable insights into the progress and challenges of the establishment of the National Bioeconomy Hub in Serbia.

From project inception, the IOF team engaged with 39 potential stakeholders, resulting in 27 positive responses for cooperation. Following individual discussions, group meetings were arranged to share project details, present ideas and approaches, and explore stakeholder involvement in the formation of the National Bioeconomy Hub. These meetings encompassed discussions on stakeholder interests, potential obstacles, and motivations to actively contribute to Serbia's bioeconomy strategy.

## Meetings with stakeholders during 2022

The first meeting was held on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2022 with representatives of:

- Regional Agency for the Development of Small and
- Medium-Sized Enterprises, Alma Mons d.o.o., and the Association "Cluster Bioeconomy".

A partnership agreement was reached during this meeting to collaborate on bioeconomy-related activities. Stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the project and demonstrated a willingness to contribute based on their experience with previous projects. They offered assistance in identifying and engaging stakeholders, particularly within the AP Vojvodina region, and shared examples of good practices. The stakeholders committed to active participation in the National Bioeconomy Hub and exploring joint project applications.



## Meetings with stakeholders during 2023

From May 30 to June 5, 2023, a series of five meetings were organized with different stakeholder groups. To facilitate constructive dialogue and avoid conflicts the stakeholders were divided into four groups: public authorities, public enterprises, private companies and associations, and faculties and research institutes.

### Meeting with Public Authorities (May 30, 2023)

Representatives from various public authorities attended this meeting, including:

- Ministry of Environmental Protection of the Republic of Serbia
- Ministry of European Integration of the Republic of Serbia
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Serbia - Forest Directorate
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia - Center for circular economy
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia - Association of Crop Farming and Food Industry
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Serbia - Association for forestry, wood processing, furniture and paper industry
- City of Belgrade - Belgrade City Administration - Secretariat for Environmental Protection - Sector for Management of Environmental Protection

During the meeting, all participants expressed their satisfaction with the project while acknowledging their limited knowledge about the concept of bioeconomy, including its definition and principles. Nevertheless, they fully endorsed the exchange of information and provision of necessary data for project implementation. Most participants were actively engaged in circular economy activities.

The formation of the National Bioeconomy Hub gained unanimous support from the attendees, who expressed their willingness to participate in all activities. They recognized the importance of effective communication, knowledge sharing, and information exchange. Furthermore, they offered support in the form of educational assistance, connecting with potential stakeholders, successful companies and start-ups as examples of good practice, and any other form of support.

The participants identified the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and Chapter 27, as well as the availability of biomass from agriculture and forestry, as good potentials for the realization of the project and the creation of a bioeconomy roadmap, strategy, and action plans.

Considering that the Roadmap for the circular economy was already established and adopted in 2022, it will be innovated in the form of the Program in 2024. The inclusion of the bioeconomy concept in the Program was accepted, as it would facilitate its integration into relevant legal documentation. Additionally, there was a suggestion to create a guide for future events focused on the circular economy and bioeconomy. This guide would aid in knowledge transfer and showcase examples of best practices.

The meeting also addressed the financing of the hub beyond the project's completion and the question of its headquarters' location. The capacity challenges, particularly in the forestry sector, and financial constraints were highlighted as potential obstacles that need to be addressed.



### **Meeting with Public Enterprises (May 30, 2023)**

Representatives from various public enterprises attended this meeting, including:

- Public enterprise “National park Kopaonik”
- Public enterprise “National park Tara”
- Public enterprise “National park Đerdap”
- Public enterprise “National park Fruška gora”
- Public enterprise “Srbijašume” - Forest Estates
- Public enterprise “Vojvodinašume” - Forest Estates
- Public Utility Company “City Sanitation”

All participants expressed enthusiasm for the project and demonstrated interest in joining the National Bioeconomy Hub. During discussions, they highlighted numerous challenges within the forestry sector, acknowledging their complexity. One crucial aspect



emphasized was the necessity for the forestry profession to assess the true potential of biomass and its availability. Questions were raised regarding the optimal utilization of "bio-waste" and the actual capacity of biomass resources.

The participants identified various pressing issues, including manpower shortages, outdated machinery, inadequate financial investments, and limited access to loans for acquiring new equipment and constructing forest roads for the efficient transport and utilization of existing forest residue. Another concern raised was the lack of significant interest in education pertaining to secondary occupations and certifications within the forestry profession. Additionally, the participants addressed the challenges posed by nature conservation requirements and restrictions within national parks. They emphasized the need for innovative legal regulations and the elimination of inconsistencies in certain laws.

To illustrate a successful case, a heating plant utilizing biomass as an energy source was cited as a positive example.

Achieving harmonization among all participants in the hub and showcasing the genuine and achievable potential of biomass were identified as important goals for the stakeholders.



## Meeting with Private Companies (June 1, 2023)

Representatives from private companies attended this meeting, including:

- Mercator-s d.o.o.
- Foresting d.o.o.
- Fornet d.o.o.
- AP Vojvodina Guarantee Fund

As in the previous meetings, the participants expressed their satisfaction with the project and their willingness to participate in the activities of the National Bioeconomy Hub. Mercator-S D.O.O., a large retail company, has expressed its commitment to operating sustainably by initiating the pilot project/action called "Recyclopedia." Their objective is to compost fruit and vegetable waste and market it as fertilizer.

During the previous period, the AP Vojvodina Guarantee Fund extended its support by offering dedicated guarantees for business projects focusing on energy efficiency and the green economy, facilitating access to bank loans. As members of the European Network (European Guarantee Fund), they proposed the inclusion of banks and the large food industry as potential stakeholders in the project.

Representatives from Foresting d.o.o. and Fornet d.o.o. shared similar challenges with those faced by the public enterprise in the forestry sector regarding biomass potential, workforce availability, and legislative harmonization. Fornet D.O.O. is collaborating with BOKU on a small-scale pilot project focused on personnel training.





### **Meeting with scientific research and educational institutions (June 2, 2023)**

Representatives from faculties and scientific research institutes attended this meeting, including:

- University of Belgrade, Faculty of Agriculture
- The Institute for Science Application in Agriculture (IPN), Serbia
- The Institute for Plant Protection and Environment (IPPE), Belgrade Serbia

The participants expressed strong support for the project and the establishment of the National Bioeconomy Hub.

The Institute for Plant Protection and Environment offered assistance in organizing workshops and conducting surveys among producers.

The Institute for Science Application in Agriculture is eager to provide assistance by organizing workshops aimed at educating their employees and facilitating the transfer of knowledge to the 23 existing advisory services located in Central Serbia.

The Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Belgrade already had bioeconomy-related projects and proposed further collaboration, including training programs and the potential establishment of a teaching module.





### **Meeting with other stakeholders (June 5, 2023)**

This meeting was attended by stakeholders who were unable to attend the previous meetings due to prior commitments. Participants included:

- City of Belgrade - Belgrade City Administration - Secretariat for Environmental Protection - Sector for Waste Management
- Cirekon D.O.O. (private company)
- University of Belgrade, Faculty of Forestry
- Chamber of Forestry Engineers

The participants gave a positive evaluation of the project's goal and expressed full support for its implementation. They acknowledged the Institute of Forestry as a reputable institution capable of attracting key stakeholders who may not have responded if the national coordinator had been someone else.



Secretariat for Environmental Protection - Sector for Waste Management highlighted the importance of waste reduction and maximizing its utilization. They highlighted the attractiveness of loans that offer benefits for projects focused on carbon dioxide reduction and decarbonization.

The Chamber of Forestry Engineers has proposed organizing training sessions on the suggested topic, inviting interested engineers to educate themselves and earn the necessary points to maintain their licenses.

The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Forestry, shared positive examples and ongoing projects and expressed their willingness to provide assistance and support.

Cirekon D.O.O., a private company known for its pioneering efforts in the development and implementation of the circular economy in Serbia, offered their full support and assistance for the establishment of the hub, as well as any other form of aid.

The question of sustainability and financing of the hub resurfaced, specifically whether it will function as an organization or a platform, and deliberations on its headquarters and leadership after the completion of the project were brought up once again.





## Summary

From project inception, the IOF team conducted 6 group meetings (December 2020, May-Jun 2023) with 27 different stakeholders to discuss CEE2ACT project and the National Bioeconomy Hub. The stakeholder groups included public authorities, public enterprises, private companies and associations, scientific research and educational institutions.

Overall, stakeholders expressed satisfaction with the project and demonstrated a willingness to contribute. They offered assistance, support, and resources for the project and were ready to actively participate in the National Bioeconomy Hub. Stakeholders offered various forms of support, including educational assistance, connecting with potential stakeholders, sharing examples of good practices, providing necessary data, and facilitating project implementation. They also identified potentials, such as the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans and biomass availability, for the project's realization.

Stakeholders also identified some problems as potential obstacles, including limited knowledge about bioeconomy, capacity challenges in the forestry sector, financial constraints, manpower shortages, outdated machinery, inadequate investments, legal regulations, and nature conservation requirements in national parks. Addressing these issues is crucial for ensuring the success of the CEE2ACT project and the National Bioeconomy Hub in Serbia.

In September/October 2023, the stakeholders will convene for the next group gathering to establish the National Bioeconomy Hub (NBH) and conduct the first workshop. In the meantime, individual meetings with existing stakeholders and potential stakeholders will be arranged as necessary to ensure effective communication and engagement.