



Bioeconomy Strategy

Austrian Federal Economic Chamber - Wirtschaftskammer Österreich
(WKO)

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Position and Demands of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ)

on the public consultation of the European Commission “Bioeconomy Strategy: [Towards a circular, regenerative and competitive bioeconomy](#) (call for evidence)”

The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) is the legal representative of the interests of around 570,000 Austrian companies in the fields of industry, commerce, trade, transport, banking & insurance, tourism, and services.

General comments

The Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) supports an EU bioeconomy policy that aims to promote a sustainable and competitive economy. The promotion of the bioeconomy as part of economic policy is the key to a sustainable industry.

The bioeconomy is an integral part of a circular economy that is geared towards returning components of goods of biogenic origin to the value creation cycle after use - if their material use is no longer possible, they can be easily recycled for energy (cascading use). Bio-based industries are seen as the key to a sustainable, innovation-driven economy. They create new markets, reduce environmental risks in the long term and contribute to security of supply and climate neutrality. This makes them not only an ecological, but also a strategic-economic field of the future.

Sufficient strategic and legal framework in Austria

Austria has already laid essential foundations for the promotion of the bioeconomy and adopted the “#mission2030” climate and energy strategy in May 2018 - an outstanding part of this decision was the development of a comprehensive [bioeconomy strategy](#), which was presented in March 2019. In addition, other laws and strategies form the framework of a national bioeconomy policy, such as the Forest Strategy 2020+.

Key points of the WKÖ for establishing the bioeconomy in Europe

1. No need for a separate European legal framework

Bioeconomy-specific regulations at EU level are not necessary, as the bioeconomy, together with the circular economy, is already strongly interwoven with established areas of the production economy in very different and diverse sectors.

Measures:

- **Political framework conditions:** Companies need reliable and supportive framework conditions (e.g. fair CO₂ pricing, incentives for sustainable products, reduction of bureaucracy) - the bioeconomy must be promoted and strengthened by **generally good economic and location conditions** in Europe (raw materials, energy, availability of labor, labor costs, permits, taxes ...)
- Transparent and objective assessment of which policies are currently **beneficial or detrimental**.

2. Resolving regulatory contradictions

The bioeconomy's growing demand for raw materials is fundamentally at odds with a consistent protection approach in nature conservation and biodiversity legislation, particularly on land outside Natura 2000 areas. Without a clear commitment from EU policy to an "as well as" approach, the bioeconomy will quickly reach its (spatial) limits.

Measures:

- Analysis of existing negative interactions (e.g. conversion to other uses, renaturation, changes in agricultural and forestry production) by the EU legislators or the Member States
- Adaptation of legislation in the sense of regional, subsidiary autonomy of decision on the basis of a serious socio-economic balancing of interests (regions must be able to decide for themselves what level of protection and use works best for them).

3. Managing pressure on limited resources correctly

Many member states lack valid data on current and future carbon flows. As a result, raw material potentials for the bioeconomy, the circular economy or the renewable energy market are drastically overestimated. Such "multiple accounting" and false expectations ultimately lead to higher prices and promote an irrational market. Politically overambitious bioeconomy targets can, for example, create new dependencies on the raw materials side and unbalance existing economic structures. While new, one-sided dependencies (cf. the EU's dependence on Russian natural gas) must be avoided, strategic raw material partnerships with countries outside the EU are nevertheless essential in many areas.

Measures:

- **Data:** Creating a uniform, recognized and EU-wide harmonized database
- Realistically assess the development of supply and demand for biogenic raw materials
- **Support the development of resources:** Instead of setting quantitative targets, policymakers should support companies in the development of resources.
- Establishing international **raw material partnerships** in the bioeconomy
- **International competitiveness:** The bioeconomy should be developed and shaped in such an evolutionary and sustainable way that European companies can compete internationally.

4. Harnessing R&D and existing infrastructure for the bioeconomy

Europe is a leader in research, development and production for many technologies that are essential for the bioeconomy. The advantages of the bioeconomy are that it is highly innovative, can go hand in hand with the "old economy" (including petrochemicals) and can use many existing infrastructures (transportation, production facilities, distribution structures, etc.) on a 1:1 basis. This keeps the transformation costs within limits.

Measures:

- **Creation of an innovation-friendly framework:** Appropriate framework conditions should strengthen the innovative strength of companies and create barrier-free access to R&D for the bioeconomy.

- **Scaling:** Many technologies are known from research but are not (yet) competitive on an industrial scale. Therefore, maintain and expand applied research and existing innovation platforms (science - industry, B2B, B2C).
- **Simplification of EU funding programs:** Bureaucratic hurdles should be removed to facilitate access for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in particular.

5. Creating acceptance for raw material requirements and technologies

Compared to other continents, Europe is poor in renewable raw materials. Due to the scarcity of land and the sometimes-unfavorable climatic conditions, the acceptance of the population, politicians or NGOs for the necessary land use plays an even greater role. The same applies to the use of certain technologies, the permissibility of which is not always discussed on the basis of facts.

Measures:

- **Acceptance:** Bio-based products must become established among end consumers and in industrial value chains.
- Articulate and propagate win-win models biodiversity-bioeconomy
- **Technology openness:** Policy should allow companies to choose the best technologies without prescribing specific technologies. No systematic or categorical rejection of certain bioeconomy technologies or products (cf. green genetic engineering, gene scissors, novel food, ...)



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