

**JOINT DECLARATION**  
**OF THE MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia), BULGARIA, CROATIA, SLOVENIA AND THE BALTIC STATES (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania)**  
**on the VISION of the**  
**Central and Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy “BIOEAST”**  
*13 June 2018*  
*Bábolna, Hungary*

The Ministers of Agriculture of the Visegrad Group, Bulgaria, Croatia, Slovenia and the Baltic States, under the Hungarian V4 Presidency, agreed on the following common position regarding the VISION of the Central and Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy “BIOEAST”:

Having regard to

- the Warsaw Common Declaration from 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016 signed by the ministers of agriculture of the Visegrad Group as well as Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia for a stronger inclusion of the research potential of the Central and Eastern European countries into the implementation of projects within Horizon 2020 in the field of agriculture, including bioeconomy; and considering the Common Conclusions from the meeting of agricultural ministers of the Visegrad Group on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2017 in Nadarzyn, Poland;
- the Joint Declaration of the Agricultural Ministers of the Visegrad Group as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on the Central and Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy “BIOEAST” signed in Visegrad, Hungary on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2017;
- the Communication from the European Commission to the European Parliament, The European Council, The Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions from the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2018 on the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021 - 2027 targeting a “New, Modern Budget for the Union of 27”;
- the proposed budget for 2021-2027 European research framework programme, Horizon Europe, which will help Europe remain at the forefront of global research and innovation, moreover to the EUR 10 billion budget earmarked for Horizon Europe to support research and innovation in food, agriculture, rural development and the bioeconomy;

- the UN 2030 AGENDA and COP21 Paris agreement, and in this context the role of the primary production sectors: agriculture, forestry and fisheries in providing food, nutrition and energy security and their share in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

#### The signatories

- (1) ACKNOWLEDGE the Communication from the European Commission on proposing a robust budget to support research and innovation in food, agriculture, rural development and bioeconomy.
- (2) ACKNOWLEDGE the importance of strategic planning of Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation Systems for the sustainable bioeconomy.
- (3) AGREE that sustainable primary production systems are only achievable with increased investments in research and innovation and a strengthened cooperation at the macro-regional level, to improve evidence-based policies while relying on circular and sustainable production systems, which can provide growth and jobs in rural areas.
- (4) STRESS that the vast potential of bioeconomy for farmers and foresters as well as for the related downstream industries can only be fully exploited if a higher participation of countries accessing the EU after 2004 will be assured in the new EU research and innovation framework programme, Horizon Europe.
- (5) UNDERLINE that through the BIOEAST Initiative, the BIOEAST countries set the VISION for 2030 to develop knowledge and cooperation based circular bioeconomies, which help to enhance inclusive growth and to create new value-added jobs, especially in rural areas as well as foster advancement of innovation ecosystems in peripheral regions, whilst maintaining or even strengthening environmental sustainability.
- (6) COMMIT to develop a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda focusing on macro-regional priority areas, aiming to enforce the European Research Area, whereas the joint effort between the signatories and the support of the European Commission is essential.
- (7) EMPHASIZE that macro-regional specificities and needs, regarding inclusiveness, should be considered, when setting the main strategic priorities, missions and tools in the framework of the future Horizon Europe regulation. UNDERLINE that the research and innovation initiative of the BIOEAST countries should receive priority in the Horizon Europe regulation to avoid further falling behind and assistance to level the playing field in the EU.

- (8) In the VISION for 2030 the signatories highlight opportunities in three strategic areas:
- SUPPORT the sustainable increase of biomass production, in order to become competitive and leading high quality food and feed producers worldwide. SUGGEST developing joint actions at EU level on the subjects of “sustainable yields and agro-ecological intensification”, essential for increasing yields, which are lagging behind the BIOEAST Countries. RECOMMEND developing specific themes and policy support actions in the current and next framework programme targeting the CEE region in relation to the BIOEAST Initiative.
  - UNDERLINE the need for circular (“zero waste”) processing of available biomass, to become key players in the development of new bio-based value chains. SUGGEST paying specific attention to the food sector and food industry in the already established partnerships (such as the Bio Based Industries Joint Undertaking), specifically targeting the realignment of the sector of the BIOEAST countries. Specific attention should be paid to the food systems approach and FOOD2030 Initiative for the BIOEAST countries’ localized agro-food systems; keeping in mind also the other key sectors (such as forestry) to attain a wholesome bioeconomy approach.
  - SUPPORT the viability of rural areas, by helping them to develop an innovative, inclusive and climate-ready growth model. SUGGEST paying attention to the EU wide diversity of production systems, those using region-specific practices at different levels and producing region-specific outputs. Note that diversity is key to resilience, which is why innovations in bioeconomy should be developed to foster diversity, not limit it.
- (9) NOTE that data and modeling capacities are lacking, therefore CALL for further development of cooperation and projects with the European Bioeconomy Knowledge Center and Joint Research Center on assessing data needs to develop evidence-based policies.
- (10) EMPHASIZE the need to continue and deepen cooperation beyond the HORIZON EUROPE Framework Programme by preparing a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda for the BIOEAST Initiative and cooperate with EU Member States and European Institutions.
- (11) CALL UPON the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament to consider this declaration when designing the new research and innovation programme.

Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry  
of the Republic of Bulgaria



Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of  
Croatia



Ministry of Rural Affairs of Estonia



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Ministry of Agriculture and Rural  
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