

# SOBIO Roundtable Seminar

12. December 2019, Brussels

## SUMMARY REPORT / HIGHLIGHTS REPORT

### 1. SOBIO roundtable: Aims and conduct

The seminar aim was to increase knowledge transfer, collaboration and constructive discussions between SOBIO research network members and invited participants actively engaged in EU bioeconomy policy, development and research. The SOBIO roundtable enabled discussions on how to serve a growing demand for in-depth knowledge on localities and a better social inclusion, knowledge that could be used in EU bioeconomy related policy making, such as the EU Green Deal (2019) and related action plans. There is a growing need to recognize that the circular based bioeconomy is not just about the economy and growth, but rather about finding more sustainable solutions for our society and opportunities for sustainable development. Based on the current research, circular based bioeconomy has profound societal implications for a wide variety of actors and beyond economic sector confinements. Hence, a focus on bioeconomies must be paired with a focus on biosocieties.

The roundtable discussion was framed around five key questions (see Annex). A key focus of the roundtable was the integration of more locally driven, qualitative knowledge to construct a socially inclusive and participatory bioeconomy. We urge that this is not understood as a replacement of current, largely quantitative indicators used for bioeconomy monitoring but as a complementary, strengthening component, hence, a "safeguard" to assure socially inclusive and sustainable bioeconomy.

### 2. Roundtable summary: Findings from the roundtable discussion

According to our evaluation:

**1. Policy makers on all institutional levels willing to design suitable and socially inclusive policy** for future bioeconomy development do not have access to up-to-date knowledge on localized development and citizen participation.



Photo: Moritz Albrecht

**2. To ensure socially inclusive policymaking**, the integration of citizens (particularly youth) must be increased and therefore requires more attention and research on possible pathways. This will help to avoid conflicts and will create support for policies and measures.

**3. Regional best practices employed for policy making require qualitative approaches as "reality checks"** that include local participation and avoid misrepresentation driven by competition for funds.

**4. There is a need to address the question of who benefits from the development of bioeconomy**, so "bioeconomy for whom?" This also includes accepting and addressing varying challenges/conflicts/trade-offs attributed to bioeconomy development by different affected groups in a more transparent way.

This must go beyond desktop SWOT or risk analysis and engage with the local realities of different stakeholders.

**5. In the long term it is necessary to engage local participation in circular based bioeconomy development.** To foster local participation, new forums for conversation are necessary. Transparency on standards for public consultations and civil society engagement is essential to avoid the label of "social-wash". Trusted regional and local networks have a key role in creating forums for inclusive planning.



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### 3. Future suggestions based on the roundtable discussions

#### 1. Adopting a new approach

The need for social inclusion beyond “informed consent” is acknowledged in most current sustainable development strategies (e.g. Green Deal, SDG’s...), yet achievements and (envisioned) instruments are well behind needs in this policy arena. Hence, a new approach for achieving wide citizen participation is required for a socially inclusive bioeconomy. The new approach should make use of the information accumulated within citizens’ everyday tasks while fostering citizens’ capabilities to express their views and participate within their own spheres of life in the realization of the bioeconomy.



Photo: Moritz Albrecht

#### 2. Creating accessible participation processes

There is a need for an additional institutional and supervisory platform that is tasked to monitor and facilitate participation and local outcomes, so that bioeconomy initiatives are sufficiently inclusive and attentive to local complexities. We note that current arenas have failed so far, and this means the risk of “social wash” cannot be avoided.

The level of participation in planning and development should be regional or local in order to tie participation to citizens’ needs. Participation and consultation processes need to be tied clearly to lower levels (e.g. regional calls to comment on EU policy making). Constructive self-criticism of regions when promoting and assessing their own developments and monitoring their efforts should be encouraged to counter excessively optimistic (often assumptive) best practice stories due to regional competition for funds.

Transparency of participatory processes and the integration of local knowledge is key to building trust and encouraging active long-term engagement. Deliberation and local level feedback, for instance by using participatory mapping, reflexive monitoring or narrative assessment methods, can facilitate

bioeconomy monitoring and assessment. When tied to regional public consultations and streamlined in Europe-wide qualitative integrative tools (e.g. participatory mapping apps) for citizens, this could be one possible route for engaging society beyond experts.

#### 3. Qualitative assessment of bioeconomy development

To ensure that that these suggestions for more inclusiveness and better participation are followed, policy makers must support qualitative research that critically assesses bioeconomy developments (even though this is costly and time consuming). This includes funding for in-depth, critical research to evaluate desired outcomes as well as unexpected and undesired effects of different developments to benchmark good practices and reduce inconsistency between reality and the best practice story. Narrative assessment is needed in addition to the reporting of quantifiable indicators for all levels of policy evaluation and feedback.

This research is vital for a realistic perspective on the outcomes of bioeconomy developments that complements existing information which is all too often based on “assumptive” socio-economic parameters (e.g. based on consultancy reports and estimations) in benchmarking and best practice documentation of bioeconomy development.

We propose stronger integration of qualitative assessments and knowledge co-created by EU (local) citizens in the European Commission’s Knowledge Centre for Bioeconomy (KCB). This could include new regional ICT tools to collect and share bioeconomy knowledge to ensure societal inclusion on all levels.



Photo: Moritz Albrecht

**SOBIO contact in this matter:** Moritz Albrecht ([moritz.albrecht\[at\]uef.fi](mailto:moritz.albrecht[at]uef.fi))

The event was facilitated by the Joint Research Centre, JRC, as coordinator of the EC Knowledge Centre for Bioeconomy <https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/bioeconomy>. The points presented in this report summarise the views expressed by the participants and do not imply a policy position of the European Commission.



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## Towards inclusive and sustainable circular bioeconomy – SOBIO event – speakers

### Event coordinator and facilitator of the event



**Moritz Albrecht** is Adjunct Professor in Sustainability Governance at the University of Eastern Finland, Department of Geographical and Historical Studies. He has 11 years of experience in social scientific research on bio-resource use policy, related economic strategies and local implementation in Europe. His focus is on studying bioeconomy-related policy development and the mobility and transformations of policy on their move from EU institutions to places of local implementation and vice versa. He has been involved in numerous in-depth case studies on local implementation of the bioeconomy and circular economy in Germany, Finland, Estonia, Norway, Russia and France. He is member of *The Green Economies Network*, Coordinator of the CBC project

*WasteLess Karelias* and currently serves as coordinator of the *SOBIO research network* at UEF. For more information: <https://uefconnect.uef.fi/henkilo/moritz.albrecht/>



**Maria Lusser** has a PhD in chemistry. For most of her career, she worked in the field of food safety for the Austrian public administration and the European Commission. In 2010 she joined the Joint Research Centre, the European Commission's science and knowledge service (<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en>), carrying out research in the field of new plant breeding techniques. She is currently part of the coordination team of the Knowledge Centre for Bioeconomy (<https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/bioeconomy>).

### Invited speakers



**Ville Niinistö** is a Finnish politician. He is a member of the European Parliament, serves on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (ITRE) and is a substitute on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI). He has been a member of the Finnish Parliament (2007-2019), the chairperson of the Green League (2011-2017) and served as Minister of the Environment of Finland from 2011 to 2014. He is a member of the city council of Turku. Niinistö has a master's degree in political science from the University of Turku. Before being elected to the European Parliament in 2007, he worked as a doctorate student in political history (Finnish foreign policy) at

the University of Turku in Finland. Further information:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/197802/VILLE\\_NIINISTO/home](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/197802/VILLE_NIINISTO/home)



**Esther Turnhout** is a full professor at the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group at Wageningen University, the Netherlands. Her research program, the *Politics of Environmental Knowledge*, includes research into the different roles experts play at the science policy interface, the political implications of policy relevant knowledge, and the participation of citizens in environmental knowledge making, also known as citizen science. Her current research focuses on the *UN Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services* (IPBES), human-wildlife conflict and on auditing practices in forest management. She has published articles on these and other topics in journals such as *Nature*, *Conservation Letters*, *Nature Sustainability*, *Science and Public Policy* and *Environment and Planning*. She is (associate) editor of *Environmental Science & Policy*, *Restoration Ecology*, and *Conservation and Society*. She has been selected as an expert for IPBES and is currently a lead author of the IPBES Global Assessment.



**Irmeli Mustalahti**, a full Professor on Natural Resources Governance, has a PhD in participatory forest practices and impacts (University of Copenhagen, Denmark). Her main research interests are long-term empirical research and teaching on responsive natural resources governance, environmental conflict mitigation and collaborative management of natural resources. She is engaged with various international research networks as well as consulting tasks. After her PhD, she has led four Academy of Finland funded research projects. Since 2015, she has been developing a course series called '*Environmental collaboration and conflict resolution*'. In addition, she is currently a working pages leader and an interaction coordinator in the multidisciplinary research project '*All youth want to rule their world, ALL-YOUTH, 2018-2023*', a consortium funded by the Strategic Research Council of Finland (SRC). She is principal investigator in the *Responsive Natural Resources Governance Research Group*:  
<http://www.uef.fi/en/web/responsive-natural-resources-governance>



**Teppo Hujala** is professor of forest bioeconomy foresight at the University of Eastern Finland, School of Forest Sciences in Joensuu, Finland. He has 15 years of experience in multidisciplinary scientific research on forest landowners, including viewpoints of policies, businesses, and knowledge practices. His expertise covers futures analysis, service research, collaborative planning, qualitative analysis and multi-criteria decision-support methods. Currently he serves as the Chair of the Board in the *Scandinavian Society of Forest Economics*, as Editorial Board Member of *Forest Policy and Economics*, and as a working group member in the IUFRO Task Force *Gender Equality in Forestry*.

Further information on his research: <https://uefconnect.uef.fi/en/person/teppo.hujala/>



**Denis Dobrynin** is a Ph.D. scholar in Environmental Policy at the University of Eastern Finland, Department of Geographical and Historical Studies. His research focus is on environmental and social sustainability of the transnational forest-based bioeconomy, and on bioeconomy-driven intensification of forestry, in the context of globalization, decentralization and privatization of forest governance. His current research project, supported by the Kone Foundation, is related to forest governance in Russia and the Finnish-Russian context of bioeconomy development and the role of non-state forest certification in representing the interests and values of various actors. He has over 10 years of practical experience in the field of nature conservation and sustainable forest management as a project manager at WWF Russia. He attended the *Young Leadership Program on Forest-Based Bioeconomy* organized by the European Forest Institute in 2016.



**Kaisa Vainio** is a PhD scholar at the School of Forest Sciences in University of Eastern Finland. Her professional training is in cultural anthropology and intercultural communication. She studies relations between human beings and their environments, specially forest and tree relationships. Currently she is studying ideas and emotions connected to trees in the research project "*Trees Near Us*", funded by the Kone foundation. Previously she worked as a communications specialist in Finnish state-owned forestry enterprise Metsähallitus Forestry. Her expertise is in local perspectives in land use planning. She has been involved in collaborative natural resource planning in Finnish Lapland, regional ecological planning, negotiation processes (Akwé: Kon) in the Sámi Homeland, creation of *Climate Smart Forestry*-methods and international cooperation in the "*Smart Arctic Forestry Network*" - project. More information: <https://uefconnect.uef.fi/en/person/kaisa.vainio/>

***SOBIO roundtable “Towards inclusive and sustainable circular based bioeconomy”, 10.12.2019, 14-17:30, Brussels.***



***Guiding questions for roundtable discussion:***

**Group I:**

***How to improve knowledge and information sharing between policy makers and the complex realities at the sub-national regions of implementation?***

- What kind of knowledge would be key for decision makers to integrate such knowledge into bioeconomy policies and strategies?
- How to supplement current socio-economic (largely quantitative) indicators/monitoring with in-depth qualitative data on local practices and needs.
- How could the strategic funding support institutions and citizens to not only carry out “duties” but also employ local knowledge to affect the direction of development?

**Group II:**

***How to catalyse inclusiveness and active societal integration in bioeconomy development?***

- How to support citizens, non-profits and SMEs to access information and resources to exercise novel & alternative ways to locally inclusive and collaborative bioeconomy development in complex realities?
- How to respond to the values and needs the local institutions and citizens to co-design, experiment, and stabilize inclusive development of bioeconomy at the places of implementation?

***Roundtable structure:***

Roundtable consists of two subgroup discussions of 35 minutes that debate each one of the question sets (Group I & Group II). These subgroup discussions are followed by a 35-minute general roundtable in which the results from subgroups are presented and further discussed.