

# Agrarian University - Plovdiv initiates the establishment of a regional hub for bioeconomy

Author(s): Аграрен университет в Пловдив

Date: 26.01.2023 Issue: 1/2023



*On 20.01 the second meeting of the future Regional Bioeconomy Hub – Plovdiv was held. The initiator of the initiative is the Agricultural University – Plovdiv, represented by the Rector Prof. Dr. Hristina Yancheva, the Vice-Rector for Research and Project Activities Prof. Dr. Vladislav Popov and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Petar Borisov. They welcomed the participants in the meeting – representatives of the public and private sectors, who demonstrated interest and willingness to support the undertaking during the first meeting on the topic in November 2022.*

Prof. Hristina Yancheva presented to the participants the accession of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv as a full-fledged partner in the BIOEAST Bioeconomy Educational Hub – an educational network of six European universities in the field of the bioeconomy.

The aim of the network, established by the BIOEAST Initiative for knowledge-based bioeconomy development in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, is to raise the level of education and research capacity in the Member States and to ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills.

Prof. Yancheva emphasized that for the development of this field, so important for Europe and the world – the circular bioeconomy – high-quality education is needed. Unfortunately, in many countries, including Bulgaria, the capacity for such development is insufficient. For this purpose, the Agricultural University – Plovdiv has been actively developing training programmes in bioeconomy for several years with the support of leading European universities in Wageningen, the Netherlands, in Dublin, Ireland and in Bologna, Italy, whose scientists also train our lecturers.

---

### **“Bioeconomy” and “E-commerce” – new Master’s degree programmes at the Agricultural University in Plovdiv**

---

With the newly established courses in bioeconomy and with its membership in the BIOEAST educational network and the European University Alliance UNlgreen, the Agricultural University – Plovdiv is laying in Bulgaria the foundation of the ambitious goal for it to become a national centre for bioeconomy, as well as to work for the inclusion of the specialty in the register of professions.



The establishment of a regional bioeconomy hub in the Plovdiv region is the logical continuation of the goals set by the university. Prof. Vladislav Popov underlined that such types of organisations of higher education institutions, companies in the agri-food, forestry and bio-based resources sectors, professional branch organisations and state, research and public institutions already exist in Europe, and the ambition of the European Commission is to create at least 100 “living laboratories” for agroecology and bioeconomy in the various countries in the coming years. The members of the hub will be able to contribute to its activities with their knowledge and practical experience, as well as to represent the interests and vision of their communities regarding bio-based solutions, technologies and good practices for recycling organic products and substances; staff will be trained and the capacity of managers will be enhanced.

---

### **EU Commissioner Mariya Gabriel at the Agricultural University at the invitation of EIT Food Hub – Bulgaria**

---

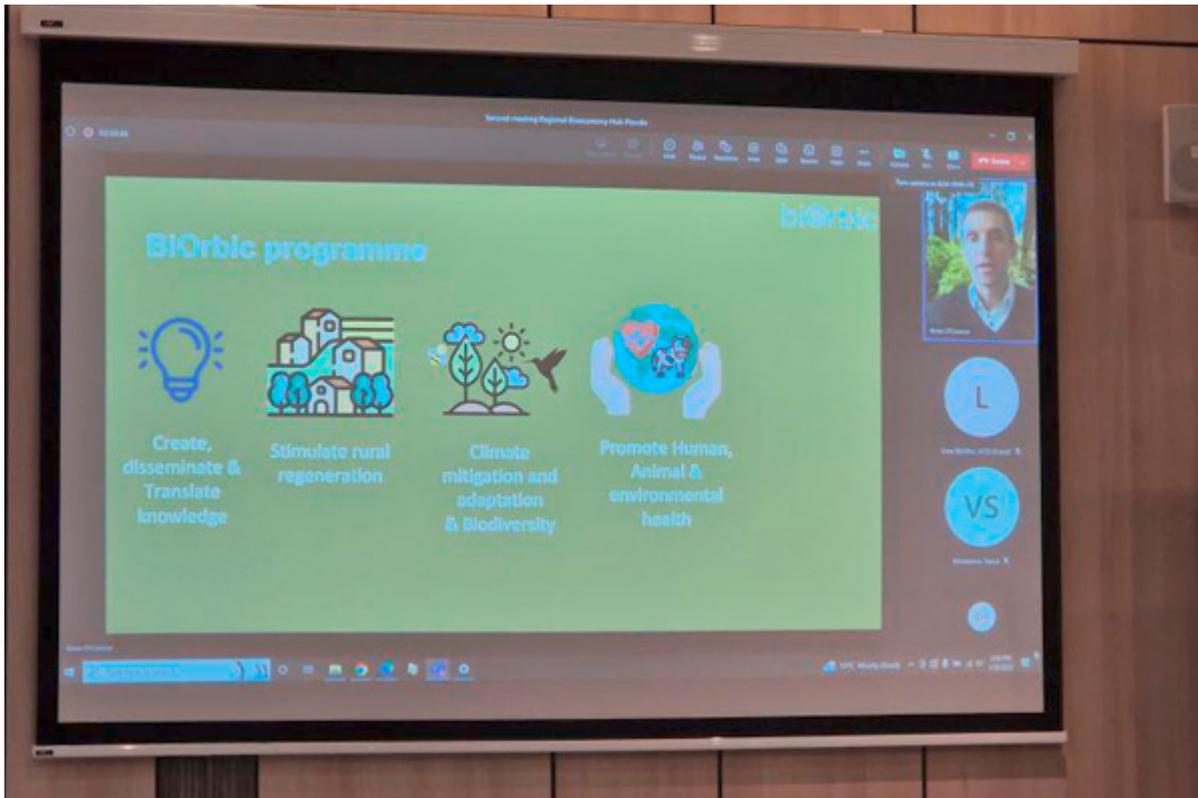
Ms. Mariyana Hamunova from Cleantech, a partner of the Agricultural University in EIT Food Hub – Bulgaria, added that one of the main tasks of the future hub will be to develop innovative tools, technologies and materials for creating a circular economy at regional level according to local needs, which will be tested, demonstrated and implemented directly in local businesses. Various business models will also be developed, engaging other participants along the value chain, with a view to eliminating inefficient processes and introducing new, efficient ones in the context of the circular economy.

Ms. Karina Angelieva, former Deputy Minister of Innovation and Growth, pointed out the importance of the real impact of the hub, namely specific, measurable and qualitative results for the local economy, agriculture, industry and education. According to her, it is necessary to create a functioning regional ecosystem, consisting of academic and research institutions, business, public bodies and regional authorities, end users and civil society organisations. She proposed that the first working year after the establishment of the hub be dedicated to the development of pilot research projects, which would be tested in real business conditions and be applicable to the specific needs of the region. Competitions for young entrepreneurs and scientists could also be initiated, to develop solutions and even to create start-ups. Angelieva expressed hope that the Plovdiv Regional Hub will be able to apply under the Horizon Europe programme in 2024 as a coordinating centre of a network of bioeconomy hubs in the Balkan region.

Prof. Vladislav Popov added that the work of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv on integrating knowledge and activities in the field of bioeconomy at local and European level started as early as 2016, and it is time to put

actions into practice in Bulgaria.

All participants united around the idea of registering a legal form of the Regional Hub and of further work in thematic working groups on sub-areas of the regional bioeconomy.



The meeting continued with an online participation of leading scientists from the universities in Wageningen, the Netherlands, and the BIOrbic Bioeconomy Centre, Ireland, who are partners in the joint project of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv CAPBIO4BG, which is part of the National Programme of the Ministry of Education and Science “European Scientific Networks”.

Topics of mutual interest were discussed with the participants in the Regional Hub – Plovdiv, related to the mapping of the bioeconomy in the region, the updated research strategy in the field of bioeconomy of the Agricultural University – Plovdiv, as well as guidelines for the development of the bioeconomy in Bulgaria.