



Press Release

1 December 2015



Bio Base NWE leverages €71million of investments and the creation of 320 jobs in the Northwest European biobased economy.

Bio Base NWE, a three-year project co-financed by the INTERREG IVB programme of the European Union, has come to an end and proudly presents its results. This network of biobased economy experts advised over 500 small and medium enterprises (SME's) to facilitate innovation and business development in biobased technologies and to stimulate the growth of the biobased economy in Northwest Europe (NWE). 27 SMEs received financial support through the project to conduct feasibility studies and scale-up trials at the Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant (Ghent, Belgium). Almost all of them declared these trials speeded up the commercialisation of their innovation. The work done within the innovation coupons scheme created a substantial leverage effect: up to €71million of investments and the creation of 320 new jobs in the biobased economy in the coming years. Furthermore the project partners discussed policy recommendations with their local and EU policy makers aimed at removing the hurdles SME's encounter during their journey to bring lab scale innovations to the market.

In the biobased economy lays a big opportunity for Europe. Locally produced biobased feedstocks rather than imported fossil resources are used to produce materials, chemicals, energy... creating a new **knowledge and technology intensive economy with high employment potential and with reduced environmental impact**. However, to achieve this transition, Europe needs to turn more of its biobased research into commercial innovation. Companies need to be able to scale-up their innovations from lab scale to an industrially viable process; this often is a challenge because of the cost, capital equipment and expertise required. Furthermore they need to find partners, users and investors, assess their feedstock security, get legal support... to successfully bring their product to the market.

In 2013, the European Commission launched Bio Base NWE, a three-year and €6,2 million project to support the development of the biobased economy in North West Europe (NWE). The Bio Base NWE consortium brought together biobased economy experts from eight organisations in five different countries. They provided networking opportunities and technological solutions to more than 500 SMEs, identified hurdles SME encounter during their innovation track and translated these into policy recommendations which were discussed with regional, as well as European policy makers. Furthermore web-based training tools (process simulation and e-learnings) were developed to help tackle the shortage of skilled professionals in North West Europe's biobased industries.

Bio Base NWE successfully implemented an **Innovation Coupon Scheme**. A coupon represented a value of maximum €30.000 for feasibility studies and scale-up work undertaken at the Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant (BBEPP), an independent, flexible, state-of-the-art demonstration facility in Ghent, Belgium, to validate innovative biobased technologies and scale them up to an industrial level. Early collaboration with experienced personnel in a flexible facility with a wide range of pilot equipment can substantially reduce costs, risks and development time and reinforces the chance to successful market entry. This scheme became a very attractive support mechanism for many SMEs. Eventually, **27 SMEs** working on sound and ambitious biobased innovations were selected across the NWE region. Evaluation of the progress these SMEs made after the trials show a huge leverage effect. **Seventeen** SMEs either signed contracts with investors or are negotiating, **five** signed contracts with customers and **four** biobased products were already commercialised before the end of the project. **Sixteen** SMEs reported to have concrete plans to build a dedicated pilot line for further development or a new production line for **a total investment of over €71million**. **Forty-three new jobs** were created; an **estimated 275 new jobs** will be created in the coming years.

TeeGene Biotech Ltd. (UK), a Teesside University spin-out venture, received a coupon and comments: "It is an immense help for start-up companies like ours to conduct feasibility studies to prove our technology platform. Experts at Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant brought new insight into our business prospective and uncovered many challenges we had been facing for two years in the process development", says Dr Pattanathu Rahman, Founder of TeeGene Biotech Ltd, "The biosurfactant scale-up work was very successful, and made us confident that we can manufacture biosurfactants at an industrial level. We are now looking into the possibility to build our own pilot line." More success stories can be found at: <http://www.biobasenwe.org/en/skills-expertise/success-stories/>.

Whilst the project has completed its extensive work program, the network will continue to flourish and looks very much forward to further innovating with SMEs in the Northwest European region ... and beyond.

Notes to Editors:

1. Financial support - Testimonials of BBNWE Innovation Coupon users: see:

<http://www.biobasenwe.org/en/skills-expertise/success-stories/>.

VIDEO: Bio Base NWE for SMEs: <http://www.biobasenwe.org/en/skills-expertise/>

VIDEO: Bio Base NWE for Policy Makers: <http://www.biobasenwe.org/en/policy-work/video-bio-base-nwe-for-policy-makers/>

2. Policy Work:

Policy Actions per country: Belgium, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands and the UK:

<http://www.biobasenwe.org/en/policy-work/>

Closing meeting at the European Parliament: <http://www.biobasenwe.org/en/policy-work/policy-actions-eu/>

3. Training

Web-based training tools (process simulation and e-learning): <http://www.biobasenwe.org/en/training-facilities/e-learning/>

4. Contact

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<http://www.biobasenwe.org/en/contact/>.

5. The Bio Base NWE partners are: Bio Base Europe international non-profit organisation (BE); Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant (BE); Ghent Bio-Economy Valley (BE); Bio Base Europe Training Center (NL); REWIN/Biobased Innovations (NL); Cluster Industrielle Biotechnologie 2021 (DE); National University of Ireland, Galway, Technology Centre for Biorefining and Bioenergy (IRL); National Non-Food Crops Centre (UK)



6. Bio Base NWE is part of:



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7. Bio Base NWE is supported by:



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