BIO2REG

Enabling transition towards circular and systemic BIOeconomy model regions by a Regions-to-Regions approach

Step to step guide for regions

How to join the BIO2REG Exchange

October 2025

Updated in November 2026 - revisions are highlighted in green for easy identification

BIO2REG in a nutshell

A circular bioeconomy is essential for achieving the EU's sustainability goals. However, the implementation of a regional bioeconomy is fraught with challenges. Bioeconomy model regions offer a systemic approach to the transition to sustainable development, based on circular economy concepts. The EU-funded BIO2REG project aims to help greenhouse gas-intensive economies unlock their circular bioeconomy potential by becoming bioeconomy model regions.

The project will promote regional networking, interregional exchange and cooperation, and provide regional stakeholders with a conceptual framework for regionalisation into bioeconomy model regions. This includes mapping best practices in a circular and sustainable bioeconomy, assessing bioeconomy potential, providing mentoring and training, forming transition alliances and making policy recommendations. The project adopts a multi-stakeholder approach, developing tools and guidelines in collaboration with regional stakeholders and engaging with regions through guided exchanges on the ground.

Find out more:

Website: https://bio2reg.eu

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/bio2reg

X/Twitter: https://twitter.com/BIO2REGeu

BlueSky: https://bsky.app/profile/bio2reg.bsky.social

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Table of contents

1   Introduction: What is the BIO2REG Exchange?

The **BIO2REG Exchange** is a hands-on, interregional programme that supports European regions in advancing their **bioeconomy transition**, the shift toward an economy based on renewable biological resources, circular value chains, and sustainable innovation.

In this context, the bioeconomy is seen as a regional transformation process that links biological resources, innovation and knowledge with regional development strategies. It helps regions replace fossil resources, strengthen rural and industrial economies and create new opportunities for sustainable growth as well as liveable regions. This includes areas such **as sustainable agriculture and forestry, bio-based materials and products** and **green technologies** that foster circular, low-carbon regional systems.

The BIO2REG Exchange connects regions facing transformation challenges, such as **phasing out coal, modernising agriculture, revitalising industrial sites**, or **creating new bio-based industries**, with peers and experts to share experiences and co-develop practical solutions.

Each exchange alliance consists of a **visiting region and a hosting region**, supported by BIO2REG partners and experts. Together, they engage in:

- **Online mentoring sessions** to define learning goals, shape agendas and prepare with BIO2REG tools and methods.
- **Regional visits** to explore demonstration sites, best practices and meet regional stakeholders.
- **Follow-up mentoring** to refine the jointly developed transition roadmap and identify funding and next steps.

To make participation accessible, **visiting regions can receive travel support of up to €900 per person (for up to three participants from different organisations)**.

Regions benefit from **tailored tools, expert guidance and peer learning**, leading to a transition roadmap with clear goals, actions, and funding opportunities to support fostering their bio-based solutions and structures. The process strengthens regional cooperation, stakeholder engagement and builds new partnerships for sustainable, green growth.

Whether your region is just starting or already advanced in its bioeconomy strategy, the BIO2REG Exchange helps you **learn, collaborate and act** toward a circular and resilient regional economy.

💬 **Need support or have questions?**

Contact the BIO2REG Exchange **Contact Office**:

Denise Gider, BioökonomieREVIER, Forschungszentrum Jülich, d.gider@fz-juelich.de

2   What's in it for your region?

Participating in the **BIO2REG Exchange** gives your region the chance to learn, collaborate and take concrete steps toward a sustainable bioeconomy.

Tailored mentoring and practical tools

Get access to customised guidance and BIO2REG tools designed to help address your region's specific bioeconomy needs and challenges, including over 60 best-practice examples from bioeconomy model regions across Europe, the Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) tool to analyse regional potential and the BIO2REG regionalisation concept, which helps regions to better connect regional resources, innovation and governance to build circular and resilient bio-based value chains, stakeholder engagement and other bioeconomy solutions. For more details, see also Chapter 4.3.

Co-designed bioeconomy transition roadmap with clear actions and funding options

Work with peers and experts to develop an actionable transition roadmap that sets regional goals, short- and mid-term measures and identifies funding opportunities. The roadmap may include focus areas such as governance, sustainable agriculture, fisheries, forestry or industrial transformation, stakeholder engagement, and plans for resource mobilisation. For more details, see Chapter 5.

Regional visits and collaborative workshops

Learn on the ground through field visits, demonstrations, and peer discussions in the host region.

For visiting regions: **travel funding of up to €900 per person is available** (for up to three participants from different organisations per region).

Strengthened stakeholder engagement and cross-sector collaboration

Gain knowledge and practical insights to build new partnerships with other regions and strengthen collaboration within your own, helping public authorities, research, businesses and civil society connect more effectively in the bioeconomy transition.

Visibility and knowledge sharing

Present your outcomes in BIO2REG webinars and contribute to Europe-wide learning through BIO2REG publications and network activities.

3 Who can apply?

The BIO2REG Exchange is open to European regions and stakeholders committed to advancing their bioeconomy transition. Both regions facing major transformation challenges and those already developing strong bioeconomy initiatives are encouraged to apply.

Eligible applicants

- **Regions facing transition challenges**
  Areas with greenhouse gas–intensive activities such as coal mining, intensive agriculture, fisheries or forestry-based industries (e.g. pulp and paper). Regions from sectors that can act as carbon sinks, such as forestry, are also welcome.
- **Regions interested in or advanced in the bioeconomy**
  Regions that already have bioeconomy strategies, infrastructures or demonstration sites, or that are building cross-sector collaboration between research, business and policymakers.
- **Regional stakeholders**
  Representatives from e.g. regional and local authorities, public agencies, development agencies, innovation hubs, research institutions, universities, farmer associations, SMEs, civil society or industry, any actors actively involved in or relevant to the regional bioeconomy transition.

Applications requirements

- Each application must involve **at least two stakeholders from two different organisations** within the same region.
- Applicants **must be registered members of the BIO2REG network** (registration is free and open to all, takes around 5 minutes).

Preference is given to institutional applicants, such as regional authorities or development agencies to ensure continuity and implementation capacity to apply the gained knowledge.

4 From application to Exchange preparation – step by step

With the application deadline extended to 4 December 2025, the process has been simplified to a one-step application. Bioeconomy profiles will be co-developed during the exchange planning phase and used to shape the mentoring offer.

4.1 Step 1: Online questionnaire (October – 4 December 2025)

1. **Register in the BIO2REG Network** (free and open to all), here https://bio2reg.eu/network/ (takes around 5 minutes) or directly apply via https://bio2reg.eu/network/exchange-form/ (Please note that applicants must be members of the BIO2REG network in order to participate in the exchange).
2. Complete the **short online questionnaire** to express your region's interest, here https://bio2reg.eu/network/exchange-form/
3. Provide key information:
   - Your region's main transition challenges
   - Stakeholders involved in the bioeconomy
   - Existing bioeconomy strategies or activities
   - Motivation and expected benefits from participation
   - Willingness to host or visit another region

$\bigcirc$ Tip: The questionnaire is short and straightforward, it takes about 10–15 minutes to complete.

BIO2REG EXCHANGE: APPLY NOW

The BIO2REG Exchange is hands-on, collaborative, and tailored to regional needs. Each alliance consists of a visiting and a hosting region, supported by BIO2REG experts and partners. Together, they combine mentoring, study visits, and tools to design a practical roadmap for the bioeconomy transition of your region.

Please note that applicants must be members of the BIO2REG network in order to participate in the exchange.

Download the step-by-step application guide

What is the main transformation challenge your region faces related to carbon-intensive sectors, e.g. coal mining, intensive agriculture such as livestock or crop production, forestry-based industries, fisheries?
(Required)

Representative 1

List 2–3 representatives with name, organisation and role, participating in the exchange.

Name (Required)

Organisation name (Required)

Organisation type (Required)

select organisation type

Role (Required)

Representative 2

Name (Required)

Organisation name (Required)

Organisation type (Required)

select organisation type

Role (Required)

Representative 3

Name

Organisation name

Organisation name

Organisation type

select organisation type

Role

Why does your region want to join the exchange, and what impact do you expect? (4-5 sentences) (Required)

How does your region's stakeholder collaborate on bioeconomy topics? Who is involved (e.g. local government, businesses, research institutions, civil society)? (2-3 sentences)
(Required)

Are there regional hubs, programmes or coordinated efforts to support bioeconomy transition? (2-3 sentences) (Required)

What kind of expertise or experience can your delegation contribute to the exchange? (e.g. sustainable farming practices, regional policy design, community engagement, scaling technologies, bioeconomy education, etc.)
(Required)

Please indicate whether your region is interested in hosting another delegation, visiting a host region, or both.

○ Hosting another region

○ Visiting another region

○ Open to both

Preferred region (if any)

Possible conflict of interest

Please indicate whether your region has any existing cooperation or formal partnerships with BIO2REG project partners (e.g. as part of projects, networks, or funding schemes).

○ Yes – please specify partner(s) and type of cooperation

○ No

○ Not sure

I commit to becoming a member of the BIO2REG network if selected for the BIO2REG Exchange. (Required)

○ I agree

Submit

4.2 Step 2: Evaluation and matchmaking (November – February 2026)

The evaluation and matchmaking process ensures that selected regions represent a balanced mix of contexts and learning needs, and that each region is paired with the most suitable partner.

4.2.1 Phase 1 evaluation of questionnaires

After the submission of your **online questionnaire**, all applications will be reviewed using a transparent and fair evaluation process. The goal is to ensure that selected regions reflect a diverse mix of regional contexts, learning needs, and bioeconomy maturity levels.

Up to 15 regions will be pre-selected by Forschungszentrum Jülich (FZJ) and validated by the BIO2REG internal peer group. The evaluation considers both the information provided in your application and the registration details in the BIO2REG Network.

What is assessed

Applications are evaluated based on seven main criteria:

- **Regional challenge**
  How clearly your region describes its main transformation challenge, e.g. reducing dependence on GHG-intensive sectors such as coal, agriculture or forestry-based industries.
- **Institutional capacity and continuity**
  Whether the application involves permanent organisations (e.g. regional authorities, development agencies) that can ensure long-term implementation capacity.
- **Motivation and expected regional impact**
  The strength of your region's motivation and the potential benefits for regional development.
- **Stakeholder collaboration**
  How actively different actors (authorities, research, business, civil society) already cooperate on bioeconomy topics.
- **Bioeconomy enabling conditions**
  Existing programmes, hubs or initiatives that support your regional bioeconomy transition.
- **Contribution to the exchange**
  What expertise or experience your delegation brings — for example, in sustainable farming, innovation support, regional policy, or education.
- **GHG intensity (if available)**
  Regional greenhouse gas intensity data (e.g. from the EDGAR database) may be considered to better understand the scale and urgency of the transition.

Additional aspects, such as willingness to host or visit another region and potential conflicts of interest, are noted for transparency but are not scored.

How scoring works

Each criterion is scored on a simple scale from 0 to 1, where:

- 1.0 = fully meets the criterion (e.g. clear need, strong motivation, well-connected stakeholders)
- 0.5 = partially meets the criterion (e.g. moderate need or collaboration)
- 0= not clearly demonstrated or missing information

The scores are combined to create an overall compatibility score. This helps ensure that selected regions show both a strong transition need and a high potential for learning and cooperation.

Outcome

Regions are selected based on their overall suitability, diversity and readiness to engage in international exchange and learning. Applicants will be informed of the results after the evaluation and invited to the next step, the online dialogue.

> ◯ Tip: Be as specific as possible when describing your region's challenges, motivation, and stakeholders, this helps match your region with the most suitable partner.

4.2.2 Matchmaking

Based on the selected regions and information of applicants submitted via the application, BIO2REG forms up to **five regional alliances**, each pairing one **hosting region and one visiting region**.

As the originally planned second dialogue step was streamlined due to the postponement of the application deadline, and to maintain the selection schedule for February 2026, applicants should be aware that the project team may contact them in December 2026 via e-mail with a individual clarification questions needed for the regional matchmaking process**.**

Matchmaking process

1. BIO2REG identifies 2–3 potential matches per host region using a matchmaking matrix.
2. The internal peer group reviews and validates all proposed pairs.
3. The BIO2REG Advisory Board confirms final selections to ensure balance and complementarity.

Matchmaking criteria

Each potential pairing is assessed on a **scale from 0 to 1 (1 = strong fit, 0.5 = partial fit, 0 = no fit)** across the following aspects:

- **Similar challenges:** Overlap in transition needs and regional priorities
- **Thematic interests**: Shared focus areas (e.g. value chains, governance, skills)
- **Complementary expertise**: Ability to learn from one another's experience
- **Different maturity levels**: Ensuring clear learning opportunities
- **Stakeholder type fit**: Involvement of comparable actor groups
- **Stakeholder readiness and diversity**: Strength and openness of the stakeholder ecosystem
- **Bioeconomy enabling conditions**: Existence of relevant hubs, programmes, or support structures
- **Geographic or cultural fit**: Manageable distance or collaboration history

If two pairs receive similar scores, the region with the higher evaluation result from Phase 1 will be prioritised.

Outcome

Each region receives confirmation of:

- Their matched partner region (host or visitor role)
- Their validated bioeconomy profile
- The next steps for mentoring and exchange preparation

4.3 Step 3: The Exchange period (March – August 2026)

The BIO2REG Exchange is the heart of the programme, a hands-on collaboration between one hosting and one visiting region, supported by BIO2REG experts and partners.

Each alliance follows a structured process that combines three online mentoring sessions (3 × 90 minutes) with on-site learning and roadmap development. The exchange is fully tailored to each region's needs, challenges and priorities.

How the Exchange works

Each regional alliance goes through three guided phases, designed to help regions learn, apply new insights and co-develop their transition roadmap.

1. Pre-Visit mentoring (online, 120 min)

Before travelling, regions work with BIO2REG experts to plan and prepare the exchange. As the online dialogue step was streamlined, this session will also briefly serve to establish an initial **bioeconomy profile** based on the application, ensuring a shared understanding of the region's goals, challenges and priorities.

- Briefly validate core elements of the region's bioeconomy context (e.g. goals, challenges, key actors) to support matchmaking and mentoring preparation
- Define learning goals and a joint agenda
- Identify relevant sites, stakeholders, and case examples
- Prepare with BIO2REG tools such as best-practice materials with plenty of successful examples for bioeconomy transition and the Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) tool

Bioeconomy profile

- **Purpose**: To co-develop and validate your region's bioeconomy profile based on your application form, which will serve the basis for matchmaking and mentoring.

Examples of key questions for a bioeconomy profile and regional context (e.g.):

- Your region's goals, priorities, and motivations for joining
- Your region's main challenges and opportunities in the bioeconomy transition
- Key actors, sectors and initiatives already in place
- Existing strategies, hubs or infrastructures (e.g. living labs, innovation centres)
- Activities on education, skills and citizen engagement
- Current funding or support for bioeconomy initiatives
- Areas where your region wishes to learn or share expertise
- Your learning interests and expectations from the exchange

💡 Outcome: a clear visit plan focused on the most relevant challenges and learning objectives for both regions.

2. Regional visit (On site, supported online via BIO2REG experts, 90 min)

During the visit, the delegation from the visiting region explores real-life examples of bioeconomy implementation in the host region.

- Visit demonstration sites, pilot projects, and innovation hubs
- Take part in interactive workshops and peer-to-peer discussions
- Apply engagement tools (e.g. business model canvas, scenario planning)
- Draft the first version of your regional transition roadmap with expert input

The visit is supported online by BIO2REG experts, ensuring continuous guidance and coordination. Where relevant, external experts may be invited to contribute on specific topics and provide additional insights.

Participants in the BIO2REG Exchange may be invited to feature in the project's documentation, for example in news articles and the video documentary. This could involve showcasing pilot projects, highlighting innovative practices or sharing experiences through interviews, on site visits, and case studies. Participation may also include photos or videos of activities, joining recorded discussions, or contributing quotes that reflect their experiences. Coordination and planning for incl. video permits this will be discussed and agreed on before the regional visits.

💰 Funding support: For visiting regions, travel funding of up to €900 per person is available (for up to three participants from different organisations per region).

3. Post-visit mentoring (Online, 90 min)

After the visit, alliances continue working together through two follow-up online sessions to finalise results and plan next steps.

- Refine the roadmap and prioritise actions
- Integrate feedback and lessons learned
- Identify funding opportunities and partnerships for implementation
- Prepare to share outcomes with the BIO2REG network

💡 Outcome: a concrete, region-specific transition roadmap with clear goals, actions, and follow-up activities.

Support tools and guidance

Throughout the exchange, regions receive tailored support from the BIO2REG consortium, including e.g.:

- Three **90-minute online mentoring sessions** (before, during, and after the visit). The first mentoring session was extended by 30 minutes to integrate key aspects of the simplified online dialogue.
- **Best-practice examples from leading bioeconomy model regions**
  Exclusive to BIO2REG network members, featuring 64 practical cases from across Europe. These examples highlight key transition topics such as regional strategies and action plans, bio-based value chains, social sustainability, funding models, and more. Join the network to access the guide here.
- **Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) tool**
  The Multi-Criteria Assessment (MCA) tool to analyse regional bioeconomy potential. See BIO2REG Deliverable 1.3, available for download here.
- **BIO2REG Regionalization concept**
  In BIO2REG, the bioeconomy is understood as a circular, systemic, and region-specific transformation model that connects biological resources, innovation and knowledge with regional development strategies. Rather than focusing on single sectors, the BIO2REG approach views the region as an integrated system, where actors from agriculture, forestry, industry, research and public administration work together to close biomass loops, create new circular value chains, and strengthen regional resilience and competitiveness. See Deliverable 1.1, available for download here.

All alliances are also invited to present their outcomes in two BIO2REG webinars, contributing to peer learning across the network.

Support materials and contacts

- Step by step guide (this document)
- Bioeconomy profile template
- Memorandum of Understanding (for selected regions)
- One-on-one support via the BIO2REG Contact Office: Denise Gider, BioökonomieREVIER, Forschungszentrum Jülich, d.gider@fz-juelich.de

Expected outcomes

By the end of the exchange, each participating region will have:

- A co-developed transition roadmap with clear actions and funding options
- Strengthened networks and stakeholder collaboration within and beyond the region
- New knowledge and skills to accelerate the bioeconomy transition
- Greater visibility through BIO2REG's knowledge-sharing activities

Possible focus areas

- Each exchange is tailored to regional needs. Typical themes may include:

- Circular, bio-based value chains and business models
- Policy and governance for sustainable regional development
- Stakeholder and community engagement
- Funding models and investment strategies
- Living labs and research infrastructure
- Education, skills, and training initiatives
- Regional conditions and enabling frameworks

5 How will the co-developed transition roadmap look like?

Each participating region completes the exchange process with a tailored transition roadmap. This roadmap translates the outcomes of the mentoring sessions, regional visits and peer learning into a practical action plan that guides the region's bioeconomy transition.

Core components of a roadmap

- **Regional transition challenges**
  A short summary of key GHG-intensive sectors, structural barriers and drivers for transformation.
- **Regional focus and goals**
  Description of the region's priorities, examples could range from governance and stakeholder coordination to sector-specific themes such as sustainable, innovative agriculture or forestry, waste valorisation or industrial transformation processes.
- **Targeted activities**
  A list will be set up defining short-term actions (within 1 year) and mid-term actions (1-3 years), containing responsible actors, collaborating stakeholders and existing opportunities to activate new regional actors in the bioeconomy transition.
- **Funding and resource mobilisation**
  A list will be made with possible regional, national or EU funding instruments, possible timelines for applications, matchmaking events will be identified as well as possible partners needed for applying to the funding.
- **Stakeholder/community engagement, activation formats and knowledge transfer on bioeconomy**
  Proposals may include stakeholder dialogues, innovation workshops or community-building events designed to support implementation, foster trust and strengthen a regional network that recognizes the potential of the bioeconomy transition and builds long-term commitment.
- **Follow-up and cooperation plans**
  These could contain, e.g. suggested bilateral or multilateral plan and dialogue between regions of the same alliance or optional cross-alliance formats for shared themes or with the BIO2REG consortium members. Furthermore, presentations in BIO2REG network webinars are foreseen.
- **Key recommendations and lessons learned**
  Key recommendations will be summarised, open questions and inspirations from the exchange will be identified.