

Federal Ministry of Education and Research
Announcement
**Regulations governing the funding of international
collaborative projects under the National Bioeconomy
Strategy**
“Bioeconomy International 2022”
of 18 July 2022

1 Aim, purpose of funding, legal basis

1.1 Aim of funding

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) intends to support the implementation of the National Bioeconomy Strategy¹ in an international context by funding collaborative R&D projects which involve foreign partners. The aim of the National Bioeconomy Strategy published by the Federal Government in January 2020 is to support the transformation of the largely fossil resources-based economy into a sustainable bio-based economy that focuses on natural material cycles. In this context, research is regarded as the key to identifying and exploiting the potential of bioeconomy. The BMBF's corresponding research funding policy focuses on six building blocks of which the first, “Biological knowledge as the key to the bioeconomy”, has particular relevance for these funding regulations (see section 2 below).

The new Bioeconomy Strategy provides substantial support towards the use of various biotechnological processes in industry. Companies are already increasingly introducing sustainable processes and products in order to remain competitive. Implementing the bioeconomy should, however, not interfere with efforts to secure global nutrition. Already today, competition for natural resources (land and water) and the use of agricultural products for different purposes (nutrition, industrial material, energy) is increasing in many countries. In addition, there is an increasing global demand for food and feed, timber and various types of agricultural products which directly or indirectly affects global land use, the climate, biodiversity and major ecosystem services.

1.2 Funding purpose

Realizing the bioeconomy as a sustainable bio-based economy requires not only national and European but also international initiatives. Global cooperation is needed to achieve the objectives set out for establishing the bioeconomy. This is the purpose of the Bioeconomy

¹https://www.bmbf.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/de/bmbf/pdf/nationale-bioekonomiestrategie.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&%3Bv=2

International funding activity. Funding will be provided for research and development projects in close cooperation with relevant foreign partners on core issues of the bioeconomy in order to strengthen international collaborations and to establish active, sustainable partnerships.

1.3 Legal basis

The Federal Government will award grants in accordance with these funding regulations, sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the administrative regulations adopted thereunder as well as the regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA) and/or cost-based grants (AZK) of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). There is no legal entitlement to a grant. The granting authority will decide freely after due assessment of the circumstances within the framework of the budget funds available.

Under these funding regulations, state aid will be granted on the basis of Article 25 (1) and (2)(a) to (c) and Article 28 (1) of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) of the European Commission.²

Funding is provided in accordance with the Common Provisions set out in Chapter I GBER, in particular taking account of the definitions given in Article 2 of the Regulation (cf. Annex for the requirements of state aid legislation applying to these funding regulations).

2 Object of funding

Funding will be provided for research, development and innovation projects (R&D&I projects) which have been selected in a competitive procedure.

Funding will be provided for German partners in international consortia (see section 3 Funding recipients). As various different funding programmes and instruments are available in the European context, participation by applicants from EU Member States is not the focus of this activity and is therefore excluded. Projects with Russian partners are not eligible for funding.

Each foreign partner must confirm its financial commitment in a binding, signed letter. These financial commitments must be uploaded in addition to the project outlines via the web portal www.bioeconomy-international.de.

² *Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 Declaring Certain Categories of Aid Compatible with the Internal Market in Application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (OJ L 187 of 26 June 2014, p.1) in the version of the Regulation (EU) 2017/1084 of 14 June 2017 (OJ L 156 of 20 June 2017, p.1), Regulation (EU) 2020/972 of 2 July 2020 amending Regulation (EU) 1407/2013 as regards its prolongation and amending Regulation (EU) 651/2014 as regards its prolongation and relevant adjustments (OJ L 215 of 7 July 2020, p.3) and Regulation (EU) 2021/1237 of 23 July 2021 amending Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty (OJ L 270 of 29 July 2021, p.39) .*

Funding is provided within the context of the National Bioeconomy Strategy of 15 January 2020 and its guidelines and strategic objectives. The strategy formulates implementation objectives with defined building blocks for research funding in order to achieve its strategic objectives.

International outlines will be submitted for the selected projects to accompany the BMBF's national activities in support of the bioeconomy and help achieve the funding objectives of the National Bioeconomy Strategy. The collaborative projects should relate to at least one of the building blocks for research funding mentioned in the strategy:

- 1) Biological knowledge as the key to the bioeconomy (microorganisms, algae, fungi, bacteria, plants, insects, etc.);
- 2) Converging technologies and cross-disciplinary cooperation (digitalization, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, automation, miniaturization, etc.);
- 3) Limits and potential of the bioeconomy;
- 4) Transfer into application (value creation networks, etc.);
- 5) Bioeconomy and society (interactions, conflicting interests, etc.);
- 6) Global research cooperation.

The call focusses on the topics of the "Biological knowledge as the key to the bioeconomy" building block. These topics include among others:

- a) Activities for the understanding and modelling of biological systems;
- b) Project outlines for researching and establishing novel production organisms for primary and industrial production;
- c) Research approaches for the development or further development of innovative biotechnological processes for bio-based production systems; and
- d) Research activities geared towards the sustainable production of biogenic resources.

Funding cannot be provided for projects primarily aimed at characterizing and/or optimizing the cultivation of primary agricultural products in the partner country. Project outlines which focus exclusively on bioenergy (use of biomass for energy generation) are also not eligible for funding. However, research projects on the biological fixation/utilization of C1 with the help of microorganisms will be considered. Further information on the topics eligible for funding can be obtained from the responsible project management organization (see 7.1 below).

International cooperation within the collaborative projects and the benefit it generates for both countries in the implementation of the National Bioeconomy Strategy are the focus of the Bioeconomy International funding activity. Cooperation must occur on an equal footing with regard to the envisaged sharing of responsibilities, the partners' expertise and the utilization of the project results, allowing all countries involved to benefit equally. The funding activity also provides an opportunity to implement project ideas which were

developed as part of measures to prepare collaborations. More information on the National Bioeconomy Strategy is available online³.

³ https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/de/forschung/energiewende-und-nachhaltiges-wirtschaften/bioeconomie/bioeconomie_node.html