

## **Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR)**

### **Announcement**

#### **Regulations governing the funding of international collaborative projects under the National Bioeconomy Strategy**

### **“Bioeconomy International 2026”**

of DD August 2025

#### **1. Funding aim, purpose and legal basis**

A modern bioeconomy makes a decisive contribution to a resource-efficient and competitive economy. It uses key technologies such as biotechnology and provides bio-based solutions to deal with global challenges (climate change, food security, protection of the environment, conservation of resources, etc.). Research and science provide the basis for bioeconomy innovations in various fields of application and economic sectors.

On the basis of this announcement, the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) intends to fund collaborative projects for research and development and innovation (R&D&I) that involve non-European partners.

These Bioeconomy International funding regulations serve to implement the Federal Government’s National Bioeconomy Strategy<sup>1</sup>. In particular, the strategy contributes to harnessing the potential of the bioeconomy, enhancing and applying biological knowledge, thus developing bioeconomy solutions for the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development<sup>2</sup> and to developing Germany into the leading innovation location for bioeconomy and biotechnology.

#### **1.1 Funding aim**

More and more countries around the world understand that the bioeconomy can contribute to sustainable economic activity fit for the future; it is increasingly gaining in importance. Companies are increasingly introducing bio-based processes, products and services in order to remain competitive. However, these should not be at the cost of efforts to achieve global food security. Today, many countries are already having to deal with conflicting aims such as increasing competition for natural resources (land and water) and the use of

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bmftr.bund.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/DE/FS/31617\\_Nationale\\_Biooekonomiestrategie\\_Langfassung\\_en.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6](https://www.bmftr.bund.de/SharedDocs/Publikationen/DE/FS/31617_Nationale_Biooekonomiestrategie_Langfassung_en.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6)

<sup>2</sup> Sustainable Development Goals – United Nations (2015)

agricultural products for different purposes (nutrition, industrial material, energy). In addition, there is increasing global demand for food and animal feed, timber and various types of agricultural products, including side and residual streams, which has direct and/or indirect effects on global land use, the climate, biodiversity and major ecosystem services.

In view of the global challenges, markets and value creation networks, a global approach is also needed in the implementation of a modern, sustainable bioeconomy. In addition to national and European initiatives, global cooperation in particular is crucial in order to be able to understand the global implications of the bioeconomy and leverage its potential. This applies particularly to research: The exchange of know-how as well as complementary expertise and experience has high potential added value. This is where the Bioeconomy International funding measure comes in.

The aim of this call is to establish and develop international partnerships in the field of research, development and innovation. These will enable closer cooperation in research on global challenges and possible solutions, the harnessing of innovative potential and the advancement of bio-based solutions for global challenges such as climate change, food security, protection of the environment and conservation of resources, etc.). Aspects such as technological sovereignty, added economic value and the creation of jobs for societal prosperity must be taken into account in these efforts.

## **1.2 Funding purpose**

The BMFTR will support pre-competitive research, development and innovation projects (R&D&I projects) carried out in collaboration with international partners from outside Europe to address central topics of the bioeconomy. The object of funding is described in detail in section 2.

The selected projects will be in addition to the BMFTR's national activities in support of the bioeconomy and constitute an additional contribution towards achieving the funding objectives of the National Bioeconomy Strategy.

The results from the funded project may only be used in the Federal Republic of Germany or the EEA<sup>3</sup>, Switzerland and the partner countries of the funded projects.

## **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/AZAP/AZV) and/or the regulations governing applications by com-

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<sup>3</sup> EEA = European Economic Area

mercial companies for cost-based grants (AZK) of the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR). 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), (b) and (c) and Article 28 (1) of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) of the European Commission.<sup>4</sup> 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 with regard to 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 are carried out in collaboration with international partners from outside Europe and which have been selected in a competitive procedure.

Funding will be provided for the German partners in these international collaborations (see section 3 Funding recipients). The international partners must organize their own matching funding and provide evidence of it.

Funding is provided within the context of the National Bioeconomy Strategy and its guidelines and strategic goals. The strategy defines six building blocks for the implementation of research funding in order to achieve the strategic goals.

The collaborative projects to be funded must address research building block 6 “Global research collaborations” as well as at least one of the three other building blocks for research funding mentioned in the strategy:

- 1) Biological knowledge as the key to the bioeconomy;
- 2) Converging technologies and cross-disciplinary collaboration (digitalization, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, automation, miniaturization, etc.);

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<sup>4</sup> 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 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 on the Functioning of the European Union (OJ L 270 of 29 July 2021, p. 39) and Regulation (EU) 2023/1315 of 23 June 2023 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 on the Functioning of the European Union (OJ L 167 of 30 June 2023, p. 1).

3) Transfer into application (value creation networks, etc.).

The funded collaborative projects must relate to at least one of the following thematic areas:

1. **Sustainable bioprocesses for industry**

- Development of processes for the digestion of biogenic raw materials and for the further processing/refining of raw materials into high-quality products.
- Utilization of residual and waste streams and CO<sub>2</sub>-based raw materials
- Concepts for cascade use of biogenic raw materials and biorefineries

Developments will include the targeted genetic adaptation of production organisms, production strains or of enzymes, the *de novo* design of synthesis pathways and the optimization and integration of bioprocesses in biotechnological/bioeconomy production processes/procedures. In this context, it is of particular importance to combine bioprocesses with chemical and technical process steps with the goal of integrating this into functioning overall approaches.

2. **Novel bioeconomy products**

Developments will include bio-based products with improved properties or minimized negative environmental impacts (including longer utilization, avoidance of the use of environmentally harmful chemicals or increased recyclability).

The products to be developed must have great potential for additional value creation and industrial application.

A particular focus is placed on the use of biogenic raw and residual materials or utilization of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The following **cross-cutting technologies/methodological approaches/processes/enabling technologies** can be applied:

- Synthetic biology for the design and construction of new biological components, units and systems, or the adaptation of existing natural biological systems
- Approaches involving artificial intelligence, automation, miniaturization and nanotechnology
- Systems biology to expand knowledge about biological processes and regulatory mechanisms in intra- and intercellular processes
- Bioinformatics tools (e.g. data standardization, modelling, open repositories)

Furthermore, the project goal should contribute to at least one of the three basic **requirements of the Bioeconomy Strategy**:

1. Fossil-based products or processes will be replaced or completely new bio-based solutions will be created.
2. Resource efficiency will be increased for example by the utilization of residues, cascade use or circularity.
3. Greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced to a lower level than generated by the current state of the art.

Projects that are exclusively concerned with socioeconomic issues are not eligible for funding.

Further information on topics eligible for funding can be obtained from the responsible project management organization (see 7.1).

The Bioeconomy International funding activity focusses on international cooperation within the collaborative projects and the benefit it generates for both countries in each case – in Germany's case in the implementation of the National Bioeconomy Strategy. For this reason, projects that are solely focussed on agricultural production systems of the partner country are not eligible for funding. Cooperation must take place on an equal footing in terms of content and workload with regard to the envisaged sharing of responsibilities within a collaboration, the partners' expertise and know-how and the utilization of the project results.

Furthermore, the funding measure provides the opportunity to implement project ideas that were initiated as part of previous preparatory measures.

In contrast to previous calls, the Bioeconomy International 2026 funding activity consists solely of one module which is open to partners worldwide (all partner countries outside Europe are possible). This year's call does not include a bilateral module that would enable co-financing. The partners based in countries other than Germany must organize their own financing, and provide evidence of this in a Financial Commitment. Funding cannot be provided for projects involving Russian partners.

The involvement of partners from industry (whether SMEs or large companies) is not a requirement. However, it is recommended that they be included at least as associated partners. Further information can be obtained from the project management organization when consulting it about submitting a project application (see 7.1).

The proposed projects must be designed in such a way that the project objectives can be achieved within a maximum funding period of 36 months.

Furthermore, the projects must be balanced with regard to the respective workloads of the international partners involved.

Further general rules for how to submit and structure project outlines are contained in the call documents at <http://www.bioeconomy-international.de>, or can be obtained from the project management organization (see 7.1).