

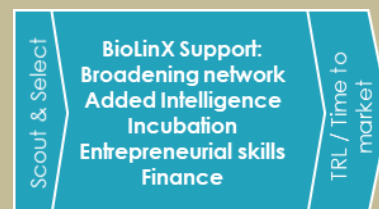
## BioLinX longread

*Project positioning, execution & outcome*



### BioLinX, key figures

500+ unique projects contacted  
400+ participants to regional events  
160+ projects impacted  
60+ projects directly supported  
30+ SMEs directly supported  
10+ regions analysed



### BioLinX consortium:

**DECHEMA** | Frankfurt am Main – Germany

**Europe Unlimited** | Brussels – Belgium

**Innovation Engineering** | Milan – Italy

**PNO Consultants** | Düsseldorf – Germany

**REWIN West-Brabant** | Breda – the Netherlands

**RISE Research Institutes of Sweden** | Gothenburg - Sweden

**SC, Sviluppo Chimica** | Milan Italy

**TNO** | Delft – the Netherlands

30 August 2018



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 652692

## The story of BioLinX...

### Positioning of BioLinX

... the story of EU funded project BioLinX commenced on June 30th, 2015. At that moment the EU funded project, under the call identifier ISIB-08-b, officially started. ISIB-08-b was part of the Societal Challenge 'Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine, maritime and inland water research, and the bioeconomy' focusing, as Coordination & Support Action (CSA), on an 'Innovative, Sustainable and Inclusive Bioeconomy'. Via ISIB-08, the European Commission wanted to address two distinctive challenges related to the development of the bioeconomy, being (in short)

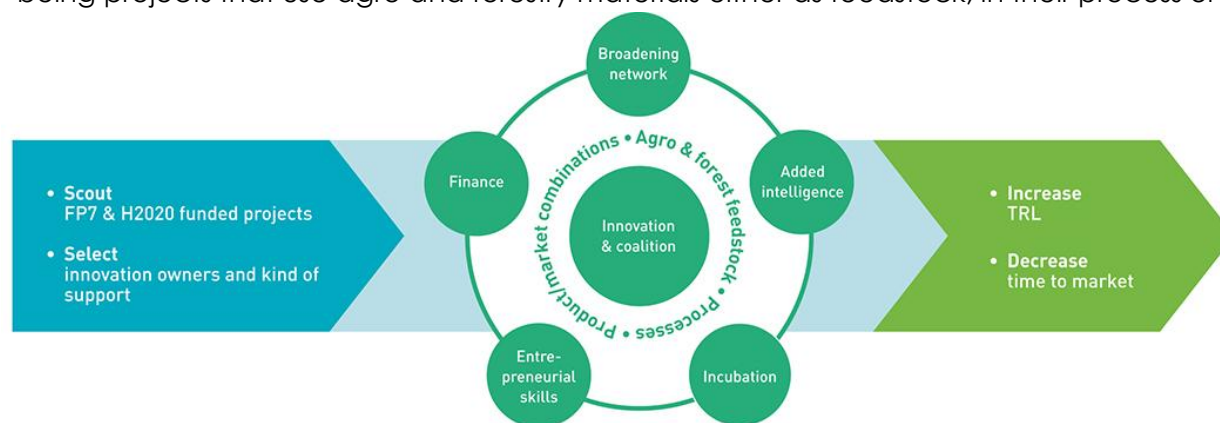
- overcoming the lack of information and public debate on the Bioeconomy and
- facilitating the flow from discovery to market applications and speeding up the innovation process.

The consortium behind BioLinX prepared a proposal that focused on the second part of the ISIB-8 challenge, being the facilitation of the flow from discovery to market applications and speeding up the innovation process. BioLinX', supported under grant agreement No 652692, full title was '**Creating links to speed-up innovation in the bioeconomy**'. Creation of links, between projects, people, innovations, ... was deemed necessary by the consortium to bring about a next step in the European bioeconomy .

*"I was actually involved in the general meeting of IBIB. Then my attention was drawn by the BioLinX event in the other room. I switched because there were very interesting presentations going on there". (Participant in the Italian Brokerage Event)*

### BioLinX proposal

The approach of BioLinX was to identify European funded Bioeconomy projects (7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme and/or Horizon2020) that were within the scope of BioLinX projects, being projects that use agro and forestry materials either as feedstock, in their process or



product. BioLinX applied this focus as it was our belief that this would enhance the possibility to find relevant (new) partners, to add relevant intelligence and point SMEs towards relevant markets.

After identifying the projects, BioLinX analyzed the projects based on the basics of the theory of the Technology Innovation System Analysis (TIS). Within the TIS approach actions can be classified into Key Innovation Activities: **Business** (related to entrepreneurial activities, market and resources), **Knowledge** (related to developing and disseminating knowledge), **Policy** (related to rules and regulations) and **Advocacy** (related to lobby, influencing, non-government). The analysis would identify potential opportunities to support the analyzed project in its further development.

BioLinX foresaw that most of the FP7/H2020 projects would focus on research and/or product development and less on market development/completion of the value chain. BioLinX analyzed regions with a Smart Specialization Strategy on bioeconomy in order to identify potential market and/or value chain partners. Access to the various analyzed regions could be gained via the regional cluster organizations.

### Linking and Support Actions

After analyzing projects, BioLinX would propose Linking & Support Actions. These actions could be related to

1. Broadening the network by providing a database of bioeconomy professionals and organizations
2. Adding intelligence by providing an intelligence database of articles, patent database and project database
3. providing incubation support by organizing new consortia, initiate project proposals, ...
4. adding entrepreneurial skills via trainings and webinars and finally
5. providing support to attract private capital and/or public funding.

All actions should support the identified and analyzed projects in increasing TRL and/or getting to closer to market. The work was split in three waves and the Reflective Monitoring would ensure that BioLinX could adapt its approach to ensure that the results could be delivered. The remainder of this longread is written as if steps as identified above were performed in a subsequent order. In real life the three waves and activities were overlapped and influenced each other.

*"Thank you for inviting me to this event. It was a very well organized event with good coaches. The benefits will probably not be immediate, but I am sure the meetings and new connections will open up some doors that might help in the future. Thank you for this opportunity to be there."*(Participant in the Swedish Finance Academy)

## Execution

### Identifying & analyzing projects

Together with BioLinX two other projects were funded under the ISIB-08-b call, being CommBeBiz and ProBio. Both ProBio<sup>1</sup> and CommBeBiz<sup>2</sup> started a few months earlier than BioLinX. All projects focused on providing support to former FP7 bioeconomy projects and as such the three projects divided the 521<sup>3</sup> projects that received funding under the FP7-KBBE

<sup>1</sup> [https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/196639\\_en.html](https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/196639_en.html)

<sup>2</sup> [https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/194810\\_en.html](https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/194810_en.html)

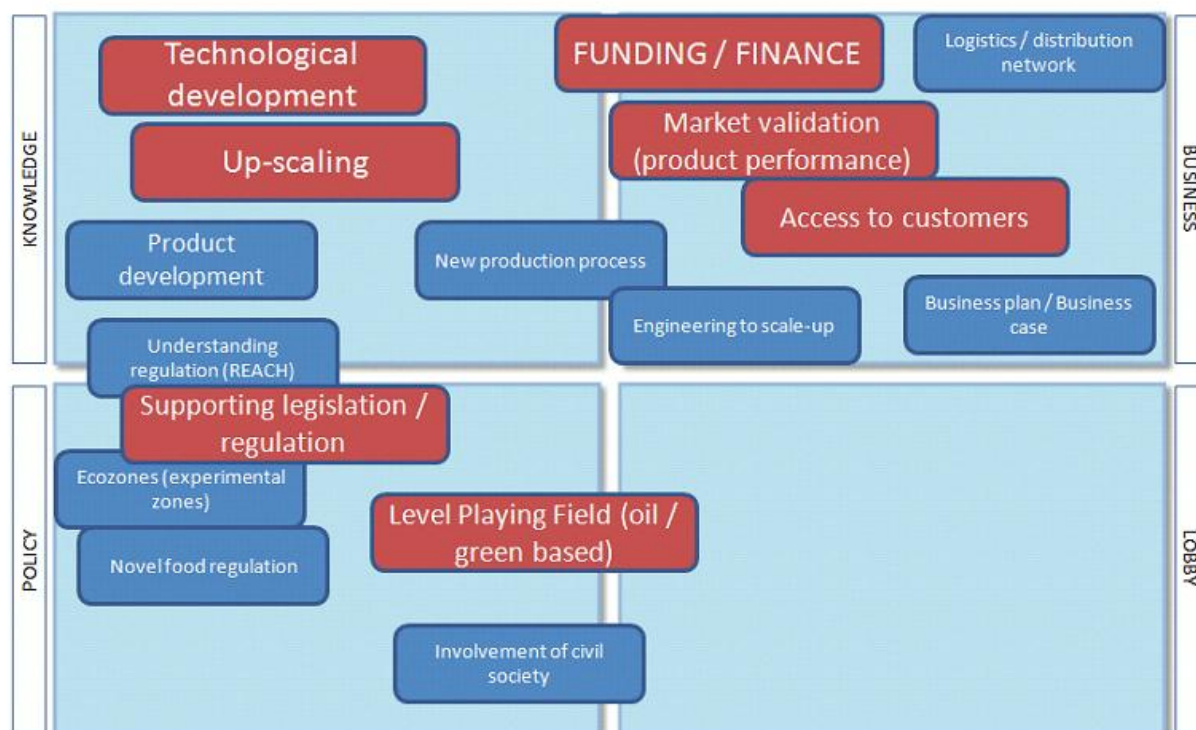
<sup>3</sup> <<[https://cordis.europa.eu/projects/result\\_en?q=programme/code%3D'FP7-KBBE'%20AND%20contenttype%3D'project'](https://cordis.europa.eu/projects/result_en?q=programme/code%3D'FP7-KBBE'%20AND%20contenttype%3D'project'>>)>>

programme. In the list of 521 projects a total of 111 CSA related projects were skipped as they were not related to innovations. The remaining 410 projects were divided. Applying its focus on agro and forestry, BioLinX adopted **67** projects from the FP7-KBBE list.

### Change of approach

Next, BioLinX reached out to the Coordinators of the selected projects. It turned out to be very difficult to make contact with the former Coordinators. If we could reach them, not all (or more accurate: almost no one) were inclined to coordinate, share contact details, convey the BioLinX message and so on. So, BioLinX soon realized that 'muddling through' via the Coordinators would not be an effective strategy in the next waves. Via its Reflective Learning, BioLinX adjusted its approach. Instead of trying to connect to the Coordinators, the BioLinX team tried to link to the project partners that were responsible for the innovation (we called them: **'Innovation Owners'**) and/or the group of partners that would be willing to continue with the innovation (we called them: **'Coalition of the Willing'**). But here also the results were marginal due to a multitude of reasons; sometimes parties were not willing to push the innovation further (not within their mission/boundaries, e.g. universities do not manufacture products), the innovation was not relevant anymore (e.g. companies changed their innovation focus) or the innovation simply was not attractive to the parties (e.g. no market). Despite the difficulties in reaching out to projects via the coordinators, BioLinX succeeded to interact with projects via its **Linking and Support Programme**. By inviting project partners as part of a broader audience to the Linking and Support activities, BioLinX could raise interest from these partners and interact with them. This has been the course of action for waves 2 and 3. By the end of the second wave BioLinX was in good shape to reach the targets set at the start of the project (selecting & scouting 60 bioeconomy projects & analyzing 10 regions).

After identifying and making contact with the project, the project was analyzed according to the basics of the TIS methodology. This resulted in the following aggregated overview:





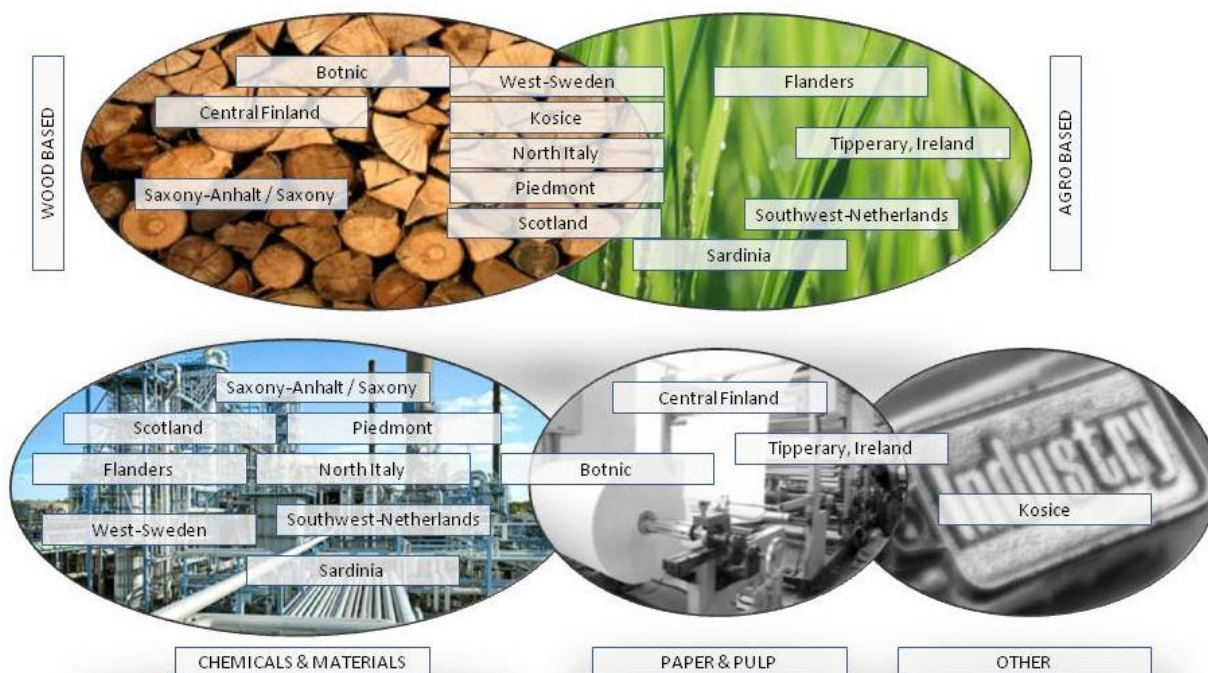
The overview shows the challenges that projects have, classified according to the TIS methodology. The bigger the red boxes are, the more dominant the challenges that the projects experience in order to get to the next TRL or closer market. As often, the challenges are also intertwined e.g. the up-scaling of the technology from one TRL to the next requires not only new knowledge, but also new funding. However, the funding is not/hardly available as long as there is limited proof of customer intention, but customers can only be convinced if the innovation is available on the next level of the TRL scale.

The results of the Identifying & Analyzing projects can be found in Deliverables [2.1](#) and [2.3](#).

***"It was a pleasure to take part in the BioLinX Finance Academy, which I found very well organized. I was pleased to see that ventures matched relevant tech and industrial competencies with a fresh and interesting business acumen to face their current and future challenges. Innovation would come out not only of the technology employed but also from the peculiar, thorough and circular approach to business modelling, value chain management and product/value proposition conception."***  
(Participant in the Italian Finance Academy)

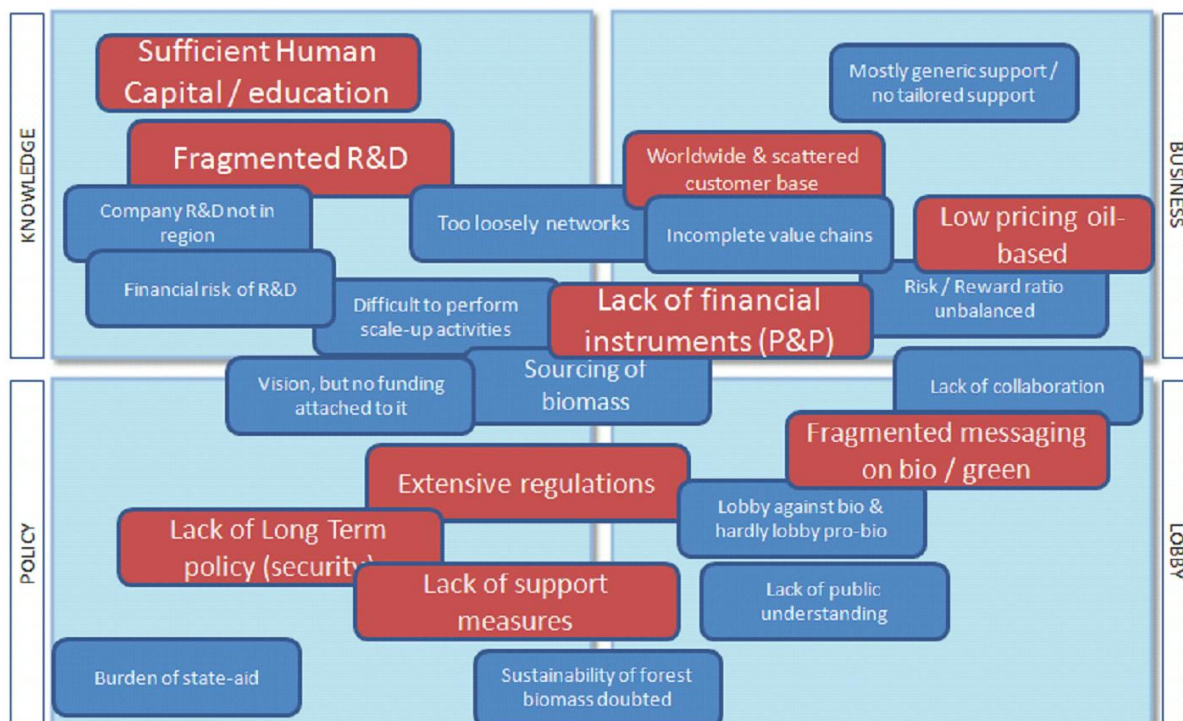
## Regional analysis

In order to bridge the gap between projects and markets, BioLinX analyzed 12 different regions in total. All of the regions were close to the focus (agro & forestry) of BioLinX and potential markets. The analysis in this case has also been done using the TIS methodology as well as a SWOT.



In order to further support the BioLinX brokerage and Linking & Support activities, the regional analyses have also been mapped to the Key Innovation Activities as part of the Technological Innovation System Analysis methodology. As with the projects, the specific regional input has been 'translated' to a higher aggregation level to enable clustering. The clustering has been performed (only) on the regional challenges, as these challenges often give a better opportunity to identify support activities by BioLinX. The following overview can be abstracted from the regional analysis. Here as well, most of the challenges are intertwined

### Key innovation issues - Regions



The results of the Identifying & Analyzing projects can be found in Deliverable [2.2](#).

*"It was a good Brokerage Event, with not too many delegates/companies. I think that it is important to get the relevant discussions within the room. The small scale made it possible to have time to find real business opportunities."* (Participant in the Swedish Brokerage Event)

### Linking & Support Programme

The BioLinX Linking and Support Programme consisted of 5 different activities, being:

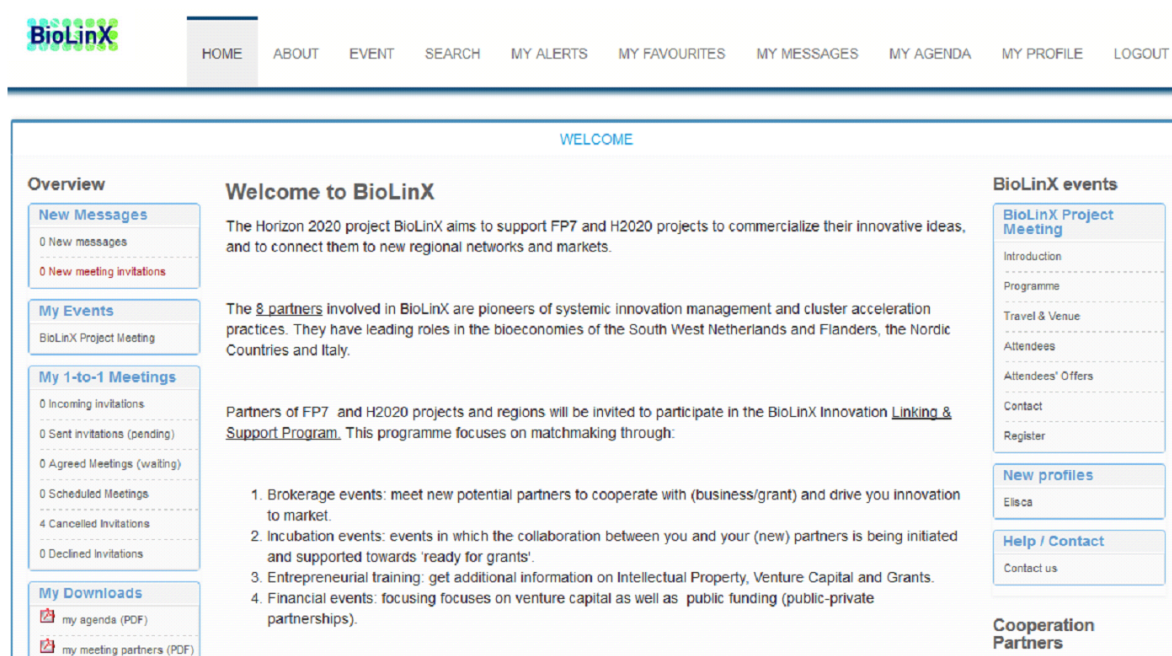
1. expanding the network by providing a database of Bioeconomy professionals and organizations
2. adding intelligence by providing an intelligence database of articles, Patent database and project database
3. providing Incubation support by organizing new consortia, initiate project proposal, ...
4. adding entrepreneurial skills via trainings and webinars and finally

5. providing support to attract private capital and/or public funding. Each of them will be described separately.

## 1) Expanding the network...

...by providing a database of bioeconomy professionals and organizations.

As a basis, the legacy of the BIO-TIC project partnering database was used. In order to facilitate the BioLinX merits, some of the database fields were adapted with a new nomenclature. Each user could create a personal profile containing company and personal details as well as a description of what the person / company had to offer, ranging from doing business to being a project partner etc. Via the system one could search for new partners, companies, technologies and offerings. The database was also the starting point for 'online partnering events'.



BioLinX organized multiple online partnering events allowing for all people registered in the database to connect. The system offered an opportunity to fix dates in calendars, share documents and chat and was supported by an online meeting room. In total BioLinX, organized **9 online partnering sessions** connecting over 150 persons from different regions and countries.

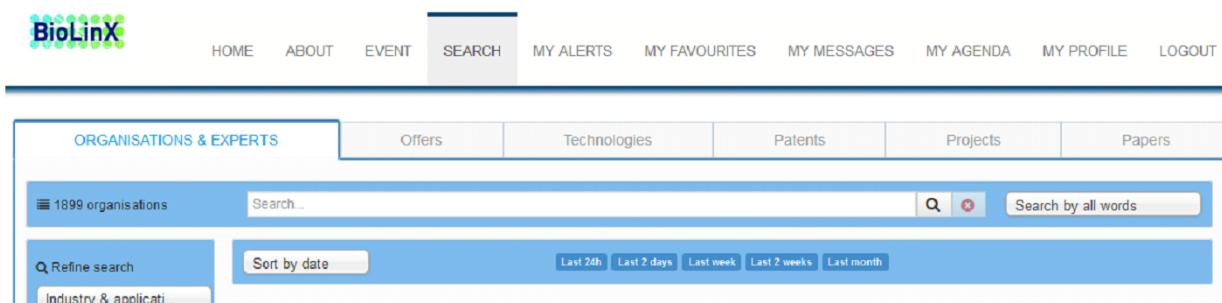
The set up of the database as well as the online partnering are part of Deliverables [3.1](#) and [3.2](#).

*“With the Finance Academy, BioLinX managed to create an informal setting where (would be) entrepreneurs could sit together and present their business plans. This resulted in eye-openers, inspiration and energy. The BioLinX team was there to provide professional input for reinforcing the business plans. But the key was that entrepreneurs were there to support each other.”*(Participant in the Dutch Finance Academy)



## 2) Adding intelligence...

...by providing an intelligence database of articles, patent database and project database. This part also came as a legacy of the BIO-TIC project. Based on using open access databases (among other things EU's CORDIS, EU-patent database) for articles, patents and projects, the BioLinX intelligence platform could offer an integrated search option. By linking to these databases BioLinX made available approximately more than **18 million scientific publications and 9 million European patent databases**. The intelligence database was an integral part of the partnering platform.



The set up and approach of the intelligence database has been **transferred to the BIOPEN project**. The intelligence database is also part of Deliverables [3.1](#) and [3.2](#).

### GDPR intermezzo

From the beginning of the project, special attention was paid to how to ensure the sustainability of the technologies developed and the community that was built up in the course of the BioLinX project. An automated transfer of the contact data to another database was not possible for several reasons: 1) The taxonomy of every database in EU projects so far is specifically customized to the requirements of the respective projects. Thus, a "simple" transfer of data from one database to another bears the risk of information getting lost or allocated into the wrong data fields, not only leading to data loss but also to data quality issues in the "receiving" project and 2) Data privacy: the data owners agreed to the use of their data in one specific project. At the time of their registration, the users could not be informed on if and where their data would be transferred. With the GDPR becoming effective on 25 May 2018, the risk of users complaining about a data transfer was seen as significant. Also, maintaining the platform beyond 25 May 2018 would have required extensive adjustments for a remaining period of only 25 days (until the end of the BioLinX project on June 30) and 3) Although regular communications have been sent out via the BioLinX partnering platform and any address changes / faulty addresses were corrected, an additional data quality check should in any case have taken place. After intense discussions, the consortium decided therefore to proceed as follows:

- All registered users of the platform were informed by e-mail that the BioLinX platform would be closed down on 25 May 2018

All registered users were invited to join the KETBIO or the BIOPEN projects. Both are EU-funded projects focusing on building communities within the European bioeconomy, enabling exchange and fostering cooperation, and allow people to register to the project. Thus, although BioLinX is not offering these services anymore, the heritage of BioLinX lives on in KETBIO and BIOPEN.



### 3) Providing incubation support...

...by organizing new consortia, initiating project proposals and so on.

Through the 9 Brokerage meetings organized, a large audience of people and projects was reached. On one side, it enabled BioLinX to share its insights and show its offerings whilst the brokerage allowed for matchmaking and presenting of ideas / innovations from the various actors in the field of the bioeconomy. After the initial contact was established, the support and linking activities were tailored to the needs of the recipient. Based on an initial needs analysis, BioLinX participants (organizations subject to support and linking activities) were offered tailor-made support, based on the BioLinX Innovation & Support Programme. In many cases, advice on available public funding opportunities was one of the main needs expressed by the BioLinX participants and their consortia/networks (which was in line with BioLinX findings on the projects challenges). This support was individually provided to the BioLinX participants, often in combination with other types of support such as incubation (project development) and/or linking or as part of the Finance Academy. In addition to the individual support provided, the BioLinX partners also tried to reach a broader audience through providing funding advice during webinars and event presentations.

#### Support provided

The incubation support was often provided in a number of different ways and forms, and frequently in conjunction with incubation support and/or linking:

- **Grant scan:** Analysis of suitable funding opportunities, including funding conditions, main programme requirements, chance of success and examples, based on the nature and current status of the innovation and the next steps envisaged;
- **Review of project ideas/call-fit analysis:** In-depth discussion of proposed project ideas and matching with suitable funding opportunities, incl. advice on further project development and completion of the consortium/network;
- **Support of project and proposal development:** Support of the BioLinX participants and their consortia/networks throughout the project development process and potentially review of draft proposals to maximize the chance of success of the funding proposal.

*"We met mainly companies that we already knew, I expected to meet more people as we were interested in getting connected with companies to cooperate in business. Our interest is mostly in finding funding opportunities, EU grants and relevant partners. We are very much interested in hearing more about the other upcoming BioLinX events. Also, the online events could be interesting, as it lowers the barrier to participation."*

(Participant in the Swedish Brokerage Event)

### 4) Adding entrepreneurial skills...

...via trainings and webinars.

The entrepreneurial skills trainings were often given in conjunction with the support to SMEs in attracting private capital (Finance Academy, see next support activity). Next to the trainings during the Finance Academy (Bergen op Zoom, Gothenburg, Milan), also two webinars were used to increase entrepreneurial skills among SMEs. During all the Finance Academies, specific attention was paid to Investment Pitching (and feedback). BioLinX ascertained that most SMEs (especially those with a more technical background) have great difficulty in pitching their company, idea and investment needs in only a few minutes

time. During each of the Investment Pitch trainings a trainer was available to explain how pitching works and what the 'audience' (of financials) wants to hear. Next, each participating company could present its own case, and received feedback and advice from various external experts (financials and industrial). **These trainings were very well received by the participants.** After the training, a social gettogether followed and during the evening (and sometimes night) the SMEs adjusted/upgraded their presentation in order to present the revised version to the experts the next day, during the Finance Academy. Other trainings were about Intellectual Property, Life Cycle Analysis & eco-design.



Next to the Finance Academies, two webinars were hosted; one about 'Life Cycle Analysis' and one on 'Introduction to creating a high growth biobased business company'. During the webinars experts shared their knowledge and insights with the audience.

*"The IP information was really an eye-opener. It showed me the direction to a new way of doing business: based on royalties. I had never realized that my trademark is such an important asset!"* (Participant in the Dutch Finance Academy)

## 5) Providing support to attract private capital and/or public funding...

... via the Finance Academies (Bergen op Zoom, Gothenburg and Milan) and as part of the incubation services (see 'providing incubation support <<link>>').

The Finance Academies were aimed at attracting private capital. After the entrepreneurial training (see 'entrepreneurial skills', bullet 4 the SMEs could consult with the experts during a

social event and adjust (and in some cases transform) their company presentations (often overnight) to be in good shape for the Finance Academy events. During the Finance Academy the SMEs again had the opportunity of presenting their business, innovation and investment opportunity, and the panel of experts reflected on the presentations. **In total, 48 SMEs participated in the Finance Academies.** Also outside of the BioLinX 'arena' some of the participating SMEs were invited to join separate events like the European Venture Summits of BioLinX consortium partner TechTour. After each Finance Academy, winners were chosen by the experts panel.

Information on Public Funding was often shared via the brokerage events and/or during the incubation support.



Winners of the Swedish and Italian Finance Academies

***“Commendable: excellent organization (pre- & post-assistance, venue etc). I particularly appreciated the industry focus of participants, start-ups (some of them were very competitive ones, if I had money I'd have invested in a couple of them myself, besides my own) and attendees alike. I also found a couple of companies with high potential for collaboration. I'll follow up in the next few weeks. In that regard it was a great experience, I feel lucky to have participated.”*** (Participant in the Italian Finance Academy)

## Reflective monitoring

By applying Reflective Monitoring, BioLinX was able to collect lessons learnt and, as a project consortium, be adaptive to increased knowledge, insights and awareness gathered during the project period, solving recurring barriers and shifting circumstances. One of the most important issues was to overcome the difficulties of conveying the (free of charge) BioLinX services. With (among other things) the insights from the Reflective Monitoring and the Communications team, the 'Success / Support stories' were identified, collected and shared. These success stories contributed to conveying the message of BioLinX, made clear what BioLinX had to offer and indicated the possible outcome of

participating in the project. Furthermore, the Reflective Monitoring allowed BioLinX to interact with its international BioEconomy Expert Panel and receive feedback from them via interviews and questionnaires. Finally, as part of the Reflective Monitoring a Bioeconomy Region Shared Innovation Game (a board game) was developed.

***“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate, I took away the necessary information for my company in terms of marketing and contacts. I had the opportunity to meet, illustrate our innovations and establish contacts with foreign investors, and even a possible partnership with one of the companies had merit, so I am very happy.”***  
(Participant in the Italian Finance Academy)

## Post project

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 the BioLinX project ended. The BioLinX project leaves a couple of tangible assets, being the 'Policy Recommendations BioLinX', 'Legacy Document' and this longread. Next, all the public deliverables are listed below.

The **'Policy Recommendations BioLinX'** reveal in an easily accessible and understandable way the learnings of BioLinX. These learnings are translated into 'active' policy recommendations.

The **'Legacy Document'** introduces BioLinX in a nutshell and provides the regional analysis. This **longread** merely has the purpose of giving a brief and simplified overview of / introduction to the BioLinX project and is not intended to replace the formal reporting to the European Commission.

In case of questions, please contact the BioLinX project coordinator: [Dennis van der Pas](#).

## Links

- [BioLinX Policy recommendations](#)
- [BioLinX Legacy document](#)
- [Deliverable 2.1 - 60 FP7 and H2020 research and innovations activities selected for the project](#)
- [Deliverable 2.2 - BioLinX Bio-regions](#)
- [Deliverable 2.3 - Analysis and Innovation recommendation report](#)
- [Deliverable 3.1 - Set up of the BioLinX partnering platform](#)
- [Deliverable 3.2 - Set up of the BioLinX intelligence platform](#)
- [Deliverable 5.1 - Entrepreneurial training & VC events: the Netherlands](#)
- [Deliverable 5.2 - Entrepreneurial training & VC events: Sweden and Italy](#)
- [Deliverable 5.3 - Consortia/networks](#)
- [Deliverable 6.1 - Reflective Monitoring: first wave](#)
- [Deliverable 6.2 - Reflective Monitoring: second wave](#)
- [Deliverable 6.3 - Reflective Monitoring: third wave](#)
- [Deliverable 6.4 - BioLinX Assessment Report](#)
- [Deliverable 7.1 - BioLinX Dissemination Plan](#)
- [Deliverable 7.2 - BioLinX Website](#)
- [Deliverable 7.3 - Dissemination & Exploitation](#)