



**GREEN ERA-HUB**  
on Agri-Food and Biotechnology

**“Partnering for the Future”  
Green ERA Hub-BIOEAST Workshop  
Budapest, 7-8 Oct 2024**

Feedback on the 2-days event  
“One European Research Area, One European Research Community”  
Widening towards the Western Balkans  
Rome, April 2024

*Stefano Grando, MASAF*



This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101056828



### **11/04/2024: 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Socratic Dialogue Event: "A sea of cooperation. Towards a cohesive Euro Mediterranean research community"**

Aim: sharing information and reflections on the perspective of developing and strengthening future collaboration of Mediterranean countries in the ERA, for joint R&I in agri-food and bioeconomy remit, in a spirit of open dialogue and mutual learning.

Target participants: funders and researchers from Mediterranean countries

### **12/04/2024: Workshop "Widening to Western Balkan countries"**

Aim: exploring how stronger R&I collaboration with WB countries in the areas covered by HE Cluster 6 "Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment" can be achieved; discussing opportunities and challenges with concrete examples

Target participants: funders and researchers from Western Balkan countries

# Emerging elements

## Issues debated

- Diversity of national conditions (internal as well as in terms of cooperation in the ERA), but with some similarities
- European research community perceived with high standards and advancing quickly. It seems difficult to “jump on the train”.
- There is cooperation among ministries in the WBs on CAP and AKIS, less on research.
- Positive role of BIOEAST highlighted by some countries.
- Dialogue is crucial to attract institutions and funders’ interest. Mobility and capacity building must be supported.

## Challenges for the WB countries:

- ✓ low integration in the international cooperation networks
- ✓ lack of national funding, overall institutional support
- ✓ need to adapt/adopt the required legislation
- ✓ strengthening the AKIS (RIs, facilities, support to young researchers, etc.)
- ✓ involvement of the private sector



# Recommendations

1. In WB often **ministries of agriculture** do not support science/research as their focus is on technical issues of producers. **Ministries of science** are the best target group, although they support science in general, not only agriculture.
2. Option to establish **regional-level initiatives** for CEECs and WBs. Discussion on the possibility to have a Partnership, or an Art. 185, specifically targeted for a certain macroregion.
  - ✓ EC replied: general preference for thematic rather than geographically bounded partnerships, encouraging inclusiveness and representativeness for them. But a discussion started.
3. Suggestions to trigger engagement of national funders:
  - ✓ Address knowledge gaps with clear **information about advantages** for the ministries/countries expected in case of involvement.
  - ✓ Address "**monetary challenges**" that prevent some countries from being part of the EU calls.
  - ✓ Explaining the "**virtual common pot**" procedure, for which budgets committed by a national funder will fund only research groups from the same country.

# Action points

1. Organise **other events** for widening, including policy makers, to keep them informed and convinced on the importance of international networking and joint R&I funding and to **explain/clarify Partnerships' procedures**, to improve capacity to engage with EU partners.
2. **Interpersonal contacts** already established under GEH can already be used to facilitate participation in joint calls and other activities already in the coming months.
3. The researchers present at the workshops can also act as **ambassadors** of these opportunities to their ministries and national funding agencies, telling the respective Ministries what they learnt.
4. It could be worth producing formal "**letters of support**" to enable contacts with hierarchies' regarding future R&I networks and calls.



**GREEN ERA-HUB**  
on Agri-Food and Biotechnology

Thanks for the attention