



BOOSTING RURAL BIOECONOMY NETWORKS FOLLOWING MULTI-ACTOR APPROACHES

NEWSLETTER

THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE BRANCHES PROJECT

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ABOUT THIS NEWSLETTER: FOUR-MONTHLY ISSUE - CONTRIBUTIONS FROM ALL PROJECT PARTNERS

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BRANCHES



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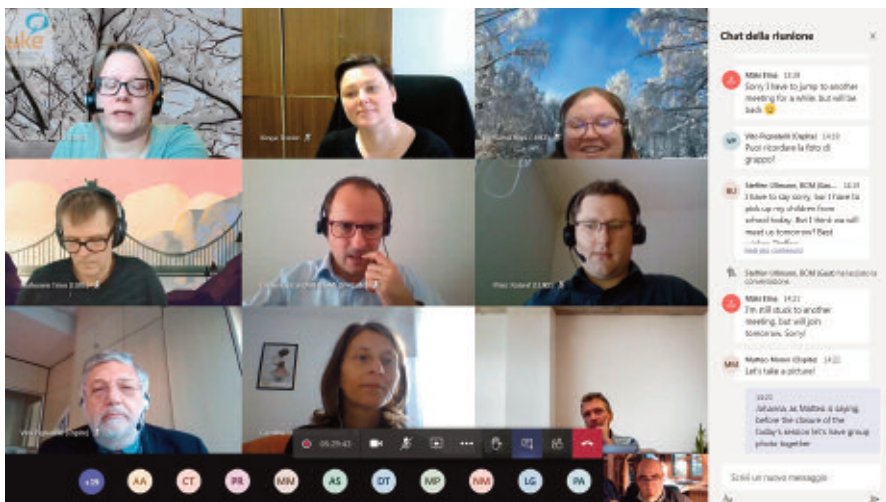
PARTNERS



Launch of "BRANCHES" - an EU project

The Project BRANCHES - Boosting Rural Bioeconomy Networks following multi-actor approaches – was successfully launched through the official kick off meeting last 2 and 3 February 2021. This initiative is funded by the European Commission as part of the Coordination and Support Action (CSA) of the Horizon 2020 Program.

In the forthcoming three-years project (2021-2023), 12 partners representing 5 European countries (Finland Germany, Italy, Poland and Spain) will collaborate for the planned project achievements. In addition, 5 other countries (Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and



Slovakia) have been designated to strengthen specific knowledge transfer activities and sharing of the results that will be achieved by the project. The project framework is wide, including the multiple themes of the green economy, ranging from the management of the rural space to the biobased industry including bioenergy. Within such broad scope, BRANCHES aims at promoting new technologies to increase the sustainability of biomass supply chains, thus making forestry and agricultural operations more efficient for the collection, transport, conditioning and storage of this valuable resource. An important role, in the project, will be played by the communication which will have a central role in allowing the widest possible visibility of all the actions foreseen in agenda. Among the dissemination tools provided by the communication strategy there are a newsletter, of which this is the first issue, a website (still under construction), a series of workshops, the dissemination of a number of good practices, demonstration days and production of audio-visuals. The project brochure is also attached to the present newsletter.

Sustainable use of biomass: first Practice Abstract ready for sharing

BRANCHES project will carry out at least 50 Practice Abstracts (PAs) to describe good models of energy and industrial use of biomass with a simplified language. The first identified PA concerns the collection and use of waste from olive tree pruning, for energy production, through a sustainable chain of energy enhancement of biomass residues, carried out in Southern Italy by Fiusis Ltd. The

company has implemented and manages a 1 MWe cogeneration plant aimed at transforming 10,000 t of pruning residues per year into 8 million kWh of electricity and heat. Fiusis' main strength is an



effective biomass supply chain that develops a system capable of meeting the needs of local farmers. In addition, Fiusis offers free services for the collection and disposal of pruning residues to over 2,000 farms. This prevents farmers from burning pruning residues in the field, thus avoiding air pollution problems. In fact, when pruning residues are burned in the plant, rather than the field, fumes are forced to pass through a highly efficient filtration system capable of removing all harmful emissions, including fine particles. The detailed description of the PA will soon be uploaded to the BRANCHES website.

National Thematic Networks are on the way

In this preliminary phase of the project, all BRANCHES Partners in each of the five countries involved, are very busy in preparing National Thematic Networks (NTNs). NTNs will allow to connect with professionals and experts in bioeconomy for a collaboration that will continue throughout the duration of the project and beyond. To this end, project partners

are sending to the main stakeholders (professionals, companies, R&D agencies, trade associations, public administrations, etc.), a dedicated questionnaire to collect suggestions and expressions of interest for future initiatives to be carried by BRANCHES that include seminars, field demonstration days, themes and contents for the forthcoming newsletter, good practice cards, etc.



Next Generation EU, a great opportunity for the “green transition”



These days, many European Countries are developing their own national plans to relaunch, with the help of Community resources, their economies weakened by the pandemic. Never in European history has such a large budget, overall 750 billion euros, been allocated for a short-term strategy (2021-2027). All involved Countries will receive subsidies in relation to the damage caused by Covid 19. These funds will largely be used to finance investments useful for protecting the environment and decarbonising the economy. In this context, the objectives of the BRANCHES project become of enormous importance to face the situation with effective tools. In the table below it is possible to see that almost 60% of the financing of the Next Generation Eu will go to the 5 partner Countries of BRANCHES (about 442 billion euros) of which almost 150 billion euros (34%) will have to be destined for the ecological transition. We just have to get to work and provide useful examples to follow.

COUNTRY	PLANS	BUDGET		SHARE ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION	
		M Euro	%	M Euro	%
EUROPE	Next Generation	750.000	100	-	-
FINLAND	Suomen kestavan Kasvunohjelma	2.300	0,3	822	36
GERMANY	Deutscher Aufbau-und Resilienzplan	28.000	3,7	11.264	40
ITALY	Piano Nazionale Ripresa e Resilienza	209.000	27,9	69.000	33
POLAND	Krajowy Plan Odbudowy	62.800	8,4	12.421	44
SPAIN	Plan de Recuperaciòn, Trasformaciòn y Resilienza	140.000	18,7	54.600	39
TOT 5 COUNTRY		442.100	58,9	148.107	34

The International Energy Agency exposes fake news on bioenergy

Some media campaigns and publications question the use of woody biomass for renewable energy production. Many of them misrepresent actual forestry practices and bioenergy systems, by associating the use of woody biomass for energy with the overexploitation of forests, even permanent deforestation, and "burning trees". On the contrary, forest bioenergy production is an integral part of the forest sector which responds to the growing demand for renewable energy by developing innovative forest management ideas and industrial processes to produce fuels, heat and electricity along with sawlogs, paper and a multitude of other biobased products. Media campaigns often ignore the widespread adoption of sustainable forest management practices, particularly in Europe and North America. While it is certainly important to identify what is needed to ensure that biomass is responsibly produced and used, recurrent misrepresentations can damage the affirmation of biomass as a sustainable material and energy source. This actions would have serious consequences for the renewed global ambitions of a zero-emission economy. To find out more, see the next news and the link below:

<https://www.ieabioenergy.com/blog/publications/campaigns-questioning-the-use-of-woody-biomass-for-energy-are-missing-key-facts/>



The use of woody biomass for energy production in the EU



This detailed 180-page report, produced by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission (JRC), constitutes a useful document to "detoxify" the debate on the sustainability of bioenergy. The study highlights also that a fast implementation of the sustainability criteria, affected by the RED II, will effectively minimize all the negative impacts associated with the use of woody biomass for energy purposes. In this perspective, forest legislation and guidelines will have to be properly applied, monitored and adapted to the purpose. The research also confirms that the largest portion of wood for energy use, coming from EU (49%) is composed by by-products from the wood processing industries, bark and post-consumer wood. "Primary wood" represents, instead, 37%, mainly derived from treetops, branches and other low-value waste. Sustainable use of the wood resource in different areas of application is also given by the growing synergies between the bioenergy sector and other forest industries, which increasingly operate with a view to the circular use of raw materials.

The entire text can be downloaded from the following link:

https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/JRC122719/jrc-forest-bioenergy-study-2021-final_online.pdf

This section is dedicated to spread ideas that will arise from the dialogue between the stakeholders of the National Thematic Networks and the partners representing BRANCHES in the various countries. In this issue we are not yet ready to fill this section because still busy to establish efficient NTN.

However, we are confident that in the next issues, "The Practioner's voice" will become a strong component of our newsletter to stimulate new ideas. Right now, we can only say that, through the NTNs, we will be able to get in touch with a large number (probably thousands) of experts, all people who, at various levels, contribute to the development of the bioeconomy and to the protection of rural areas in Europe.

See you soon!



Giuseppe Caserta



In the present issue we propose the point of view of Giuseppe Caserta an Italian scientist who - together with other bioenergy pioneers - founded the Italian Biomass Association (ITABIA) in 1985 and exactly 20 years ago (in April 2001) opened a conference by saying: "Biomass play a very important role among renewable resources of energy. However, if we only appreciate biomass for energy production, we do not understand the full potential of this natural resource, whose correct use can contribute to reduce atmospheric pollution, to protect soil, to rightly manage by-products and waste and to the establishment new job opportunities, all contributing to a sustainable rural development. In particular, the environmental implications of biomass are many and

varied, both at a "global" as well as at a district and / or farm level.

One of the most important issues related to biomass is the protection of land. There are many endangered lands around the world. For example, abandoned farmlands are often left in disuse. These lands undergo continuous physical and socio-economic degradation with damages that are irreversible and difficult to assess. Furthermore, in many areas of our country (Italy), modern and highly intensive agriculture has often led to a progressive reduction in the number of crops adopted in production systems (due to the increasingly high crop specialization), to a progressive simplification of crop alternations (up to the achievement of a single agronomic succession) and to an ecologically unsustainable fight against weeds, with the consequent reduction of plant biodiversity (both of crops and wild species) and of fauna biodiversity (especially for the micro and macrofauna connected to them). A more extensive cultivation of biomass, aimed at increasing environmental biodiversity, could mitigate this strong pressure on the natural environment. At the district level, the correct management of biomass can certainly represent a very effective means of reducing the risk of erosion of both agricultural and forest soils, especially related to steep lands of hill and mountain areas ...".

The BRANCHES Project, managed by its knowledgeable experts, will continue sharing Mr. Caserta's views by focusing on a "biological" solution for the protection and sustainable development of rural areas through the complex and articulated "biomass system".



International webinar “Residential Wood Combustion Towards Low Emission Systems”

The event free to attend, is organized by IEA Bioenergy and stems from the awareness that wood combustion plays a consistent role in residential heating, in many countries. However, inadequate knowledge, poor appliance design, unrealistic test methods and poorly functioning wood stoves often lead to undesired and damaging consequences for air quality in many residential areas. IEA Bioenergy Task 32 works



to gather and disseminate essential knowledge on how to reduce emissions from small scale wood combustion while maintaining the benefits of heating homes with local renewable resources. The webinar will present the latests recent results from ongoing work within Task 32 on design guidelines for wood stoves and real-life test methods. The full report will be published in the coming month. This webinar will be held on Thursday, May 6, 2021 from 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm Central European Summer through Zoom web conferencing platform (for more information click [IEA-Bioenergy-Webinar-Poster_06-May-2021_1021x1229_final](#)). To participate as attendee, please register online here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ghbb2111TbmRSPxVoTpo1Q

Unable to attend the live lecture? Lectures will be recorded and archived for later viewing at:

<https://www.ieabioenergy.com/iea-publications/webinars/>



ABOUT BRANCHES

This is a H2020 “Coordinaton Support Action” project, that brings together 12 partners from 5 different countries.

The overall objective of **BRANCHES** is to foster knowledge transfer in rural areas, enhancing the viability and competitiveness of biomass supply chains and promoting innovative technologies and sustainable agricultural and forest management.

www.branchesproject.eu