10th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy of Baltic Sea Region
12-13th of June, 2019
Gdańsk, Poland

SUMMARY REPORT

Seminar: Towards a Digital Bioeconomy in the Baltic Sea Region
12 June, 15:15-16:45

The theme of the seminar was introduced by three speakers: the EPC "Digital Roadmap for a Circular Economy" initiative, the business oriented "Forest Industry View" and the project "Wood in Construction".

The panel discussion focused on the following aspects:

- *Is policy enabling the digital transformation of the bioeconomy/circular economy in the BSR?*
- *How can digitalisation create new business opportunities for bioeconomy/circular economy in rural areas?*
    - *What are the potential challenges from a rural perspective (e.g. connectivity and altered value chains) in terms of a digitalized bioeconomy and how do we solve these?*
- *What is needed to reach the full potential of digital transformation in bioeconomy?*
    - *What are needs in terms of competence, and how can we fulfil them?*
    - *What are needs in terms of standardisation and harmonization, and how can we fulfil them?*
- *What needs to be done in terms of integrating digitalisation and bioeconomy/circular economy policy work?*
    - *How can EUSBSR promote interaction between the two trends?*

The discussion touched upon a wide range of topics. Among observations and views expressed were for example:

Important to share information and protect the flow of data. Who owns the (accumulated) data? You can make business on it!

Public procurement should be used to enhance a digitalized bioeconomy.

Digital competences are needed to ensure transformation to a digital circular economy, otherwise people are left behind.

Digitalisation is a way to "repower" and build capacity in rural areas, making them more attractive for investments and startups as development becomes less depending on location and distance.

A better digital infrastructure is needed in rural areas. Not only a question of 5G and broadband. For example 3D-printing could support re-localisation of production and provide new jobs in the manufacturing businesses. But the environmental aspects of digitalization must be considered, e.g. energy consumption, greenhouse emission, waste.

Digitalisation is «the new oil» but Bioeconomy is not even in the dictionary in many BSR countries.

Policy must be used to ensure that we steer the digital bioeconomy in the direction we want to. Also digitalisation must be prioritized as a horisontal priority in S3 (smart specialization strategies) as is the case for example in Region Värmland S3 work.

In Germany a Digital Farming Strategy is being developed (digitalization as an enabler) but still waiting for a Bioeconomy Strategy. A concept like Open Science Cloud must be touched upon. The ecosystem aspects could be boosted by digitalization, i.e. use digitalization to fulfill the scopes.

There is a gap between The Nordics and the Eastern part of BSR when it comes to circular economy. In the Nordics advanced technology is being developed with a mature discussion but for example in Latvia the awareness raising work has just started. There should be more focus on how to take the Baltics to the Nordic level and reduce the gap between East and West.

Collaboration is the key to reduce this gap. In Latvia people in the rural areas often see digitalization as a threat, taking away jobs. Therefore need for more focus on adult education and how to adapt to lifelong learning. A matter of changing mindsets, also among land and forests owners. Circular economy should be seen as a development tool and should be integrated in existing study programmes, e.g. ICT studies.

In her conclusion the moderator emphasized digitalization as an enabler to use productions in new innovative ways.

Rapporteur: Torben Aaberg