Greece

Empowering the Central and Eastern European Countries to Develop Bioeconomy Strategies and Action Plans

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The Greek National Bioeconomy Hub (NBH), launched in September 2023 and led by the Cluster of Bioeconomy and Environment of Western Macedonia (CluBE), **has rapidly expanded from a small core group to a broad network** spanning research, NGOs, businesses, policymakers and regional actors, all engaged in shaping Greece's circular bioeconomy.

Its growth is closely tied to the push for a National Bioeconomy Strategy. Engagement has widened from the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MoEE) to its Waste Department and the Ministry of Agriculture(MoA), whose early work on the strategy is now better aligned with CEE2ACT through the Hub's collaboration. CluBE's regional engagement further supports national efforts, strengthening coordination across levels and underscoring the need for a national framework to guide regional actions.

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Challenges

Despite the Hub's growth, some gaps remain: most notably the **limited involvement of the fisheries sector,** despite its importance for Greece. Engaging companies, especially SMEs, is also challenging due to scheduling constraints between businesses and policymakers.

These issues are being addressed: the hub is working with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to bring fisheries on board, and further SME outreach is planned with support from MoA and MoEE. CluBE also sought to leverage the 2025 Thessaloniki International Trade Fair to attract additional companies and stakeholders.

Limited financial and human resources restrict the number of dedicated meetings, so CluBE leverages partner events such as the University of Athens Summer School and Hellenic Biomass Association assemblies, to maintain engagement. A hub meeting is planned for early 2026 during an international agricultural fair.

Key successes

The Greek National Bioeconomy Hub has built strong momentum by combining strategic planning with practical, relationship-driven engagement.

Key successes include:

Effective early stakeholder mapping: Identifying key actors from the start and gradually expanding the network by engaging receptive, "low-hanging-fruit" stakeholders.

Targeted and personal outreach: Using personal connections, timely participation in external events, and existing relationships to open doors to ministries and new sectors.

Strong integration of public actors: Bringing major public bodies into the hub and fostering trust through a win-win approach where ministries gain insights and stakeholders gain a channel to policymaking.

Bridging bottom-up and top-down efforts: Creating shared understanding between local actors and national authorities, helping align grassroot initiatives with policy development, particularly important in the Mediterranean context.

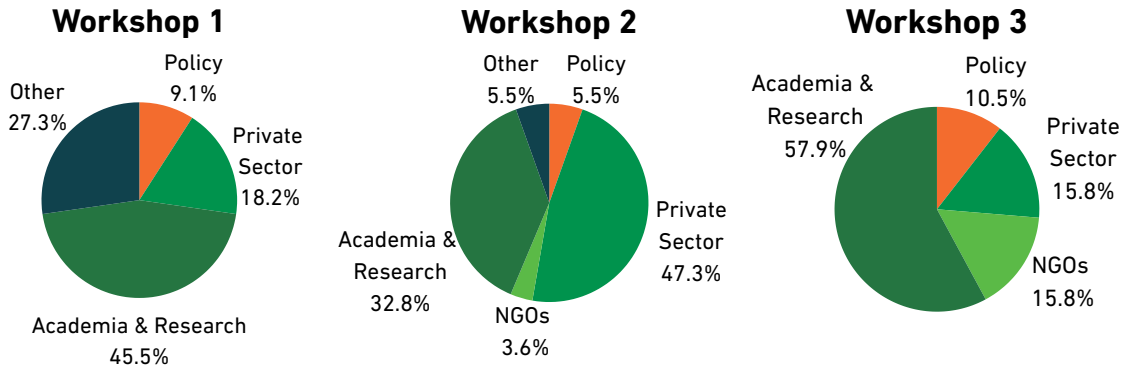
Together, these successes have strengthened collaboration across sectors and laid a solid foundation for Greece's emerging bioeconomy framework.

Bottom-up stakeholder engagement

The Greek hub follows a "**Mediterranean" engagement model: highly personal, relationship-driven, and focused on win-win value.** Strategic stakeholder mapping allowed CluBE to expand the Hub step by step, combining formal meetings, informal networking, and follow-ups at partners' and industry events.

Hub workshops keep participants informed on national developments, including the upcoming bioeconomy strategy and funding opportunities, which remain strong incentives for engagement. CluBE also leverages partner events to maintain connections without needing standalone meetings, while aiming to organise one major annual hub event, next planned at the 2026 Agrotica Fair in Thessaloniki.

Looking ahead, the Hub plans to create thematic groups on key bioeconomy topics, though its reliance on external events may limit the organisation of the thematic meetings.



A hub survey from the third workshop shows a strong satisfaction and impact: over 70% of participants were "very satisfied," around two-thirds found the Hub highly impactful, and nearly 80% felt they had ample opportunity to voice their views. **About 90% reported improved communication with other stakeholders and greater confidence in discussing bioeconomy topics. Most participants gained knowledge of key challenges and solutions,** and nearly 40% noted increased organisational resources for bioeconomy. The majority (90%) want to continue collaborating with the Hub. Workshop attendance was moderately skewed toward men (≈60%).

The Greek Hub uses a broad, flexible Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as an **internal tool to show collective commitment when engaging with ministries**. The drafting is mainly done by the Hub coordinator with feedback from key stakeholders. This is due to the fact that many partners are still unfamiliar with European project jargons

The MoU remains broad in scope, deliberately avoiding restrictive details so as to ensure a wide buy-in. **As a major step, the Hub successfully organised an MoU signing on April 8, 2025.**

Sustainability and the Role of CEE2ACT

The Greek Hub will continue leading the national and regional bioeconomy efforts beyond the CEE2ACT, leveraging close collaboration with core partners like the Hellenic Biomass Association to create a self-reinforcing loop of mutual supports. The Hub coordinator also plans to seek new funding and secure slots for bioeconomy topics at high-profile events such as the Delphi Economic Forum, as well as industry-focused meetings, to raise awareness and strengthen sector dialogue.

The CEE2ACT has been instrumental in launching the Hub, providing credibility and access to new members thanks to its high-profile consortium. Furthermore, valuable knowledge transfer, tools and guidance were highly appreciated. While EU-level frameworks need local adaptation, peer exchanges with other CEE2ACT Hubs have significantly benefit the Greek Hub. More in-person peer exchanges with other Hubs remain an important aspiration, as the exchanges create an informal space for deeper conversations and practical lessons that digital meetings cannot fully replicate.

Lessons Learned and a Way Forward

Greece's National Bioeconomy Hub shows that building trust through personal relationships, smart timing, and win-win scenarios is highly effective for expanding bioeconomy communities, particularly in contexts where top-down directives alone cannot mobilise stakeholders. The flexibility and resource-efficient model of leveraging external events shows how to sustain engagement with limited resources. The path ahead will be defined by the upcoming national bioeconomy strategy and its dedicated funding streams, that will likely transform stakeholder interest and momentum into tangible actions.

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