



Romania

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



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CEE2ACT

Romanian's bioeconomy involves a wide range of actors, including academia, clusters, SMEs, and research institutions.

Launched in September 2023, the Romanian National Bioeconomy Hub (NBH), coordinated by the Association of Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises of Covasna County (ASIMCOV), has quickly become a key connector. Its coordination benefits from ASIMCOV's experience and trusted relationships, and is further strengthened by links with national and regional initiatives—including sister projects and the Department for Sustainable Development.



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Challenges

Over the course of its implementation, the Romanian Hub has faced challenges in maintaining steady governmental participation and interest. While ministries appreciated the bottom-up approach to understand stakeholder needs, frequent political changes have made long-term engagement difficult.

Bridging the gap between policymakers and the private sector also remains a key challenge. Supported by research institutes, which are often under government supervision, the Hub works to align SMEs' needs with policy priorities for a circular bioeconomy. **The Romanian Hub recognizes the need to strengthen outreach and make participation more appealing for stakeholders.** Recently, the Hub partnered with a Bucharest research institute to establish a technology transfer centre offering lab services for SMEs in the food sector—an initiative designed to expand services and deepen engagement.



Key successes

The Romanian Hub achieved significant progress despite the challenges faced. Its key achievement has been **securing the active involvement of the Romanian Department for Sustainable Development**, a governmental body responsible for drafting the national Circular Economy Strategy. The department's commitment to supporting the creation of a Romanian National Bioeconomy Roadmap under the CEE2ACT project marks an important step toward institutionalizing bioeconomy policy in the country. Its institutional stability has also provided valuable continuity for the Hub amid frequent governmental changes.

Key successes include:



Partnership with Romanian Department for Sustainable Development: Active engagement of this Department ensures political visibility and policy alignment for bioeconomy initiatives.



Development of a national bioeconomy roadmap: Commitment to prepare and promote a Romanian bioeconomy roadmap as part of CEE2ACT processes.



Stable and diverse workshop participation: Three workshops gathered consistent involvement from academia and research institutions, SMEs, reflecting strong engagement.



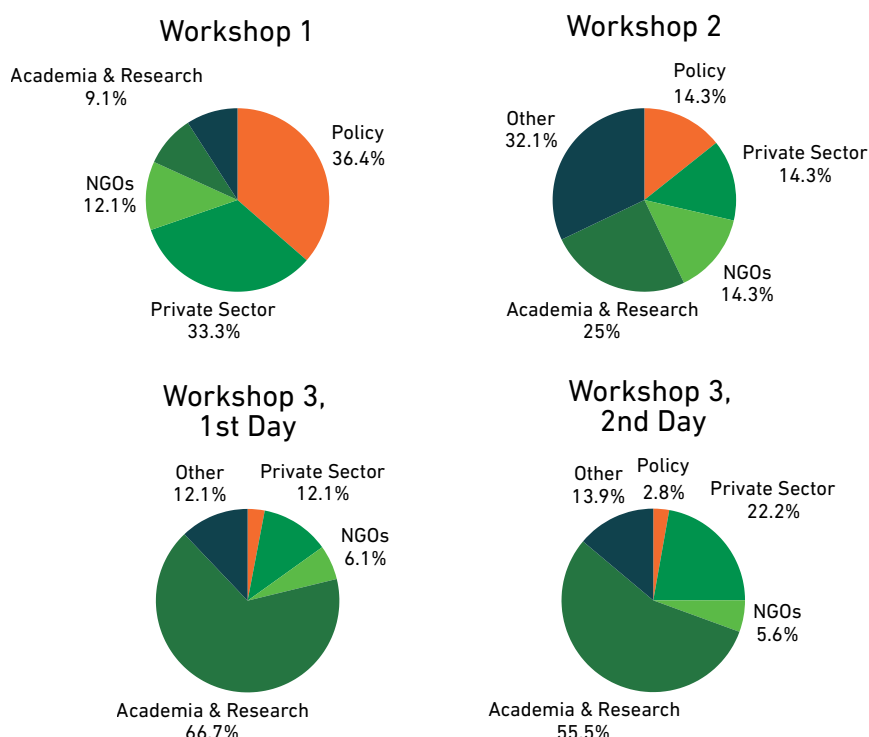
Gender balance: The Hub successfully maintained balanced participation throughout the workshops.

Overall, the Romanian Hub has established a strong foundation for future policy development and stakeholder cooperation, reinforcing its role as a trusted platform for dialogue and coordination in the national bioeconomy landscape.



Bottom-up stakeholder engagement

The Romanian Hub **adopted a pragmatic approach focused on personal engagement**. Direct communication and in-person meetings at the ASIMCOV business incubator helped build trust and open dialogue among participants. The Hub also collaborates with the Department for Sustainable Development and the BOOST4BIOEAST project to co-organize events, strengthen partnerships, and raise the visibility of bioeconomy discussions. A national closing event for CEE2ACT and sister projects is planned for late 2025.



The hub supports **five thematic working groups covering key bioeconomy sectors: wood industry, bioenergy, biomaterials, aquaculture, and agri-food**. Each group is coordinated by relevant clusters that also lead outreach and engagement activities.

A 2025 survey among workshop participants showed very high satisfaction levels across all aspects, including duration, content, and format. Most participants highlighted the workshops' strong impact on networking and knowledge sharing—76% said the Hub helped them expand their connections, and 97% felt they had enough space to share their goals. Communication and confidence improved notably, with almost all respondents reporting stronger collaboration and understanding of bioeconomy topics. A majority also increased internal resources for bioeconomy activities and plan to continue cooperating with partners met through the Hub.



The Hub co-developed a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ten key members, aligned with the Romanian national bioeconomy roadmap (developed in CEE2ACT). The draft was shared with hub members to gather feedback. Voluntary and open to all stakeholders, the MoU reflected shared priorities of research institutes and clusters, with strong support from the National Research Institute for Bioresources and other key partners. **The Hub plans an MoU signing event in November 2025, another milestone achieved by the Hub.**



Sustainability and the Role of CEE2ACT

Ensuring the Hub's sustainability beyond the CEE2ACT project is a key priority. **ASIMCOV, together with the Agro-Food Cluster, will continue to coordinate and support the Romanian National Bioeconomy Hub.** Its activities are backed by three ongoing projects closely aligned with the Hub's objectives, providing a solid foundation for the next five years. **The Hub will maintain its current structure within the business incubator** co-managed by ASIMCOV, which offers access to wide range of facilities and programs to its members.

To secure long-term continuity, ASIMCOV is actively pursuing new projects and financial resources to retain staff and expand operations. Collaboration with the newly established technology transfer centre will further strengthen the Hub's capacity to support bioeconomy initiatives and sustain stakeholder engagement well beyond the completion of the CEE2ACT project in 2025.



Lessons Learned and a Way Forward

The Romanian Hub shows that trusted facilitation, face-to-face engagement, and cross-project collaboration can effectively strengthen bioeconomy cooperation. The Hub has positioned itself as a credible platform linking SMEs with research and policy, but sustaining long-term impact will depend on expanding services, reinforcing public-private dialogue, and maintaining institutional continuity.



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