

Good Practice in Bioeconomy Policy Coordination

Bioeconomy policy and governance challenges arise from specific characteristics of bioeconomy (Table 1). To address these challenges, bioeconomy policy must be coordinated across different policy fields and ministries. However, surprisingly little is known about how this coordination is done. ShapingBio took a “glimpse into the black box” how bioeconomy policy coordination between national ministries and stakeholders works in practice in the EU member states Germany, Italy, and Estonia.

About

SHAPINGBIO

ShapingBio is an EU-funded project with the overall aim to support and accelerate bioeconomy innovation and the deployment of new knowledge in the EU and its member states.

ShapingBio aims to provide evidence-based and concrete information and recommendations for better policy alignment and stakeholder actions to realise the cross-sectoral potential of the bioeconomy and to reduce the fragmentation across biobased sectors and the food system, as well as in policies across regions, domains and governance levels.

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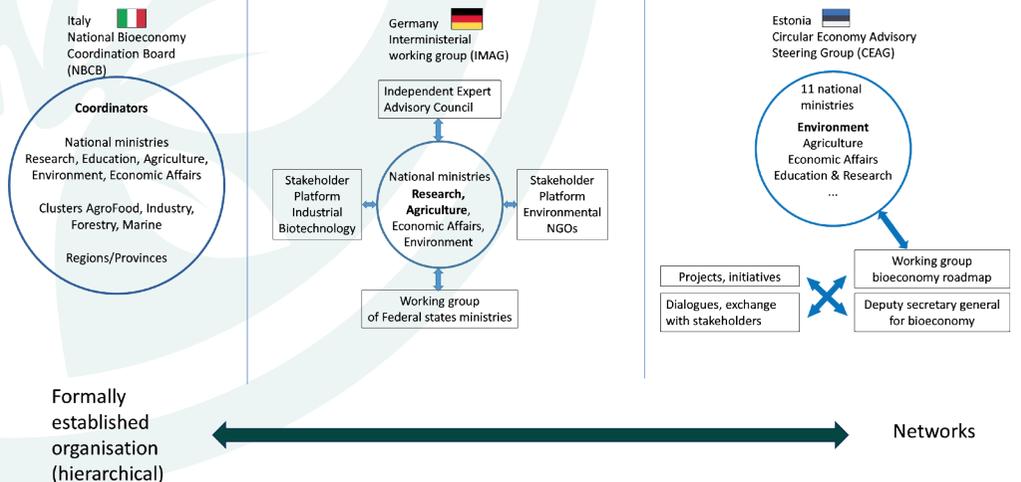


Characterics	Description
Transformative	From linear fossil-based to circular bio-based bioeconomy
Cross-cutting	Sectors, Policy fields
Knowledge-based, novel value chains	Technological, organisational, social innovations, Novel actor constellations
Goal conflicts, stakeholder interests	Agreement on priorities, solutions, ways to achieve goals, compromises across sectors, policies, stakeholder interests
Geographical governance levels	There are many bioeconomies - International, EU, Member States, regions, municipalities

Table 1
Characteristics of bioeconomy which make coordination across different policy fields and ministries essential

Figure 1
Organisational forms of bioeconomy policy coordination in Italy, Germany and Estonia.

Each of these countries has formally established coordination bodies which differ in their organisational structure. The coordination bodies can be located on a continuum between a single formally established body (Italy) at one end of the spectrum and less formalised networks (Estonia) at the other end (Figure 1):



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Table 2 gives a comparative overview of the key features and differences of the organisational forms chosen in Italy, Germany and Estonia.

Coordination can be achieved by negotiations between the relevant actors, with the aim to come to joint agreements and compromises, or by consultations with the aim to avoid interference and conflicts between different actors, or a mix of both approaches. Given the cross-sectoral and transformative character and the strategic importance of bioeconomy, negotiations seem more appropriate as prevailing coordination mode. However, this mode is more resource-intensive, difficult and conflict-laden than a focus on consultations.

Criterion	Italy National bioeconomy Coordination Board NBCB	Germany Interministerial Working Group IMAG	Estonia Circular Economy Advisory Steering Group (CEAG)
Formal body dedicated to	Bioeconomy	Bioeconomy	Circular economy
Location of formal body	Above ministries	Between ministrie	Ministry of environment
Hierarchy in formal body	2 levels (Non-ministerial coordinators members)	3 levels (2 leading ministries, 2 actively contributing ministries, other members)	2 levels (Chairperson, members)
Hierarchical level of delegates to the body	Medium to high	Low (division level)	High (deputy secretaries of state)
Political decision making competence	Low, preparation of decisions	Low, preparation of decisions	High
Stakeholder inclusion	In formal body	Via networks	Via networks

Table 2 – Main features and differences in the organisation of bioeconomy policy coordination in Italy, Germany and Estonia.

Good practice for a coordination mode with a focus on negotiations

- An open, constructive working climate with trustful relationships between the members.
- A level playing field for all members of the coordination body, rather than a certain hierarchy within the body.
- A prevailing mindset to find pragmatic solutions and compromises, rather than getting entangled in debates on principles.
- Frequent and regular communication within the coordination body with a focus on direct person-al interaction and dialogue, rather than exchange via written comments.
- For the resolution of controversial issues a “neutral” chairman or coordinator of the coordination body who can more easily adopt a mediating, countervailing and facilitating role than a person who has to represent a certain ministerial position.

Conclusion

The ShapingBio analysis shows the diversity of options for bioeconomy policy coordination, their strengths, potential pitfalls and success factors in a structured way. Each analysed country has its own rationale, frame conditions and path dependency why a certain way of coordination was chosen. Therefore, transfer of a coordination option to another country will most probably not work in the same way. But other countries can reflect their own situation against the presented options as a benchmark. This may induce mutual learning and may give inspiration how to further improve aspects of bioeconomy policy coordination in EU member states.

- Read the full deliverable: https://www.shapingbio.eu/media/5rkncm45/shapingbio_d2-1_policy-governance_final.pdf
- Read the workshop report: [shapingbio_ws-documentation_bioeconomy-policy-coordination-2024-11-19-final.pdf](#)