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Regional Collaboration Key to Unlocking Ireland's Bioeconomy Potential

Representatives from local county councils, regional assemblies, and national government departments met today to discuss regional bioeconomy development in Ireland.

The bioeconomy plays a vital role in meeting Ireland's climate targets, supporting biodiversity, and creating sustainable jobs across regions. Significant progress has been made through initiatives like the National Bioeconomy Action Plan 2023-2025 and the updated National Planning Framework. However, ensuring these national strategies are effectively embedded into local and regional planning remains a priority.

To address this, the Irish teams on two EU-level projects—ShapingBio and ROBIN—collaborated to deliver an online capacity-building webinar for local and regional authorities. Hosted by Teagasc, the Southern Regional Assembly and Munster Technological University, the event combined insights from both projects, a panel discussion with policymakers, and networking opportunities to foster cross-sectoral collaboration.

Professor Maeve Henchion of Teagasc and ShapingBio highlighted the importance of policy coordination: “Effective bioeconomy development depends on strong, ongoing alignment between national, regional and local policies. Insights from our research with policymakers and practitioners across Europe, through the ShapingBio project, along with practical tools developed and tested in the ROBIN project, are helping to support this.”

Dr. Noha Mahmoud of ShapingBio and Teagasc emphasised: “The webinar tackled the critical challenge of turning national strategies into action. By building knowledge and facilitating exchange across government levels, we can drive meaningful progress.”

Key takeaways from the webinar included:

- The bioeconomy's potential to address climate action, circular economy goals, and sustainable development.
- The ongoing need for improved coordination between sectors and across EU, national, and regional governance levels.
- Opportunities to expand channels for inter-regional collaboration and learning, both in Ireland and across Europe.
- Knowledge sharing nationally, regionally and locally is vital to scale bioeconomy initiatives.

Colm Walsh of the Southern Regional Assembly and ROBIN noted: “Translating national strategies into local action is vital. Today's webinar was a valuable contribution to enhancing synergies between all levels of government. Initiatives like ROBIN provide practical tools and the building blocks to

empower regional and local authorities to accelerate the achievement of their circular bioeconomy targets.”

Dragica Grozdanić of Munster Technological University (MTU) and ROBIN added: “The session shared ShapingBio’s policy-related insights and ROBIN’s practical tools, alongside a dynamic panel discussion. It created valuable space for networking and idea-sharing among policymakers.”

The webinar marked a step towards strengthening cross-county collaboration and advancing unified approaches to bioeconomy development, highlighting the importance of local-regional-national alignment in achieving Ireland’s sustainability ambitions.

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Notes

1. Further information on the event is available [here](#). A recorded video of the event will be available on the ShapingBio and Robin websites in the coming days.
2. [ShapingBio](#) is an EU-horizon 2020 project that aims to support and accelerate bioeconomy innovation and the deployment of new knowledge in the EU and its member states. Project coordinator: Fraunhofer Institute for Systems and Innovation Research ISI (Dr. Sven Wydra)
3. [Robin](#) is an EU-Horizon 2020 project that aims to empower Europe’s regions to adapt their governance models and structures in ways that accelerate the achievement of their circular bioeconomy targets while promoting social innovation and accounting for different regional contexts.