



„Bioökonomie: Neue Chancen aus Acker & Wald“

Dienstag, 15. Jänner 2019, 10.00 -13.00 Uhr

Steiermarksaal, Congress Graz, Schmiedgasse 2, 8010 Graz

Abstract: Prof. Dr. Stefan Schepers, Secretary General, High Level Group

EUROPE'S BIOECONOMY : challenges and opportunities

A bioeconomy is an economy where the basic inputs are derived from renewable biological resources. It can concern all sectors or just a few, such as transport fuels or food production. It is presented as a response to mega-challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation costs, or resource scarcity. It is often seen as the basis for a so-called circular economy.

In policy making, usually two objectives come together : ensuring competitiveness and managing the ecological footprint of the economy. The EU has long been a global leader, with a bioeconomy which is assumed to create about 20 million jobs and generates a turnover over 2 trillion €. It has been and still is a key driver in the EU's research funding (Horizon 2020) and in various other policy measures. However, the EU seems to lose now its competitive advantage to other economic powers (USA, China, Japan).

This is caused by a number of systemic challenges resulting from the very nature of the EU construction and operation, which hinder policy coherence within the EU Commission and between the EU and Member States. It is difficult to design and implement policies which require to manage cross-sectoral complexity with a policy making system set up more than half a century ago for fundamentally different purposes (realising a common and a single market). As a result, many requirements to achieve a circular or bio-based economy, such as financial sector rules, are not in place yet, hindering transition investments. The efficacy of much funding must be questioned too.

Without a deep re-think of the ways in which EU policies are made, it must be feared that delivery of bio-economy policy promises will remain weak. The Austrian Presidency has made a timid start with this reform discussion (Bregenz Declaration on Subsidiarity). But the convergence of interests in the EU of 27 is difficult to achieve today. As a consequence the transition to a bio-economy will be slower than is technologically possible, and further environmental degradation, and its collateral effects, for example on health, and economic competitiveness losses must be feared.