GLOBAL BIOECONOMY SUMMIT 2026

Why bio-based Operational Groups stray rare

A survey of barriers and enablers across the nine-phase lifecycle, from fifteen expert stakeholders in six EU Member States

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BBioNets
Boosting the adoption of Bio-Based Technologies

KEY MESSAGE The same three barriers of administrative and regulatory, engaging primary producers and no follow-on route appear in every country and in most phases and they are still reported from inside Europe's most mature ecosystems.

15 OG expert responses	**6** Member States: IE GR PL CZ ES IT	**9** Lifecycle phases diagnosed	**3** Cross-cutting barriers

01 The question

Operational Groups (OGs) are the CAP's main instrument for innovation on farms and in forests, yet bio-based OGs stay rare. EU evaluations study groups that *were funded* . We ask why so few form at all.

WHY NOW

The EU's 2025 bioeconomy framework commits, in **2026** , to backing producer cooperation in bio-based value chains through the EIP. This is an implementation question today.

02 Method

Qualitative survey of the people who run the instrument i.e., managing authorities, CAP networks and advisors.
Two versions: **A** diagnosed barriers by phase, **B** collected what works.

Respondents n = 15	**Ireland 2**	**Greece 5**	**Poland 1**	**Czechia 1**	**Spain 5**	**Italy 1**
	Version A	Version A	Version A	Version A	B (3), A (1), both (1)	Version B

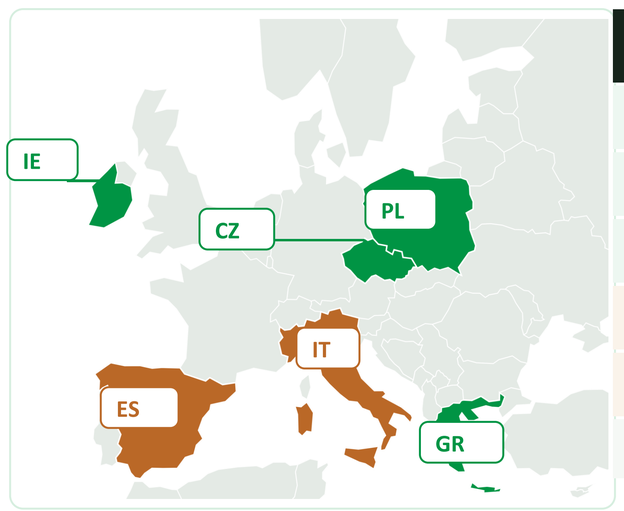
03 Where the lifecycle breaks

BARRIER	Ideation	Consortium creation	Engaging producers	Proposal writing	Admin burdens	Implementation	Reporting	Dissemination	Post-project
Administrative and regulatory burden	■			■	■	■	■		
Engaging producers		■	■			■		■	
No follow-on route								■	■
Support available Rarely bio-based specific	■	■	■	■	■				
Recommendations for future	Bioeconomy roadmaps; concept grants	Brokerage platform; bioeconomy broker	Field days; plain language; pilot farms	Application builder; dedicated bio-based helpdesk	Lump sums; clear eligibility codes	Higher advances; flexible periods	Reliable portals; innovation audits	Funded comms; searchable catalogue	Scale-up instrument; TRL-phased funding

■ Barrier reported here ☐ Not reported ■ Support: several forms → few → little or none — Marks show what respondents reported, not prevalence.

04 Six Member States, uneven ground

Fifteen respondents in six Member States: **Version A** diagnosed barriers, **Version B** collected enablers. Numbers are responses received.



SHARE OF ALL OPERATIONAL GROUPS NOTIFIED 2014–2022 · N = 3,438

20%	Spain
18%	Italy
~6%	Greece
4%	Poland
1%	Ireland
<1%	Czechia *

€1.8m **Ireland's** average project budget, against an EU average near **€335,000**. Few groups, very large ones.

Shares: European Commission (2024). Covers Operational Groups in general, not bio-based ones.
** Czechia not shown separately in the EU project database distribution.*

05 What already works

Mechanisms from Spain and Italy described by respondents as **deliberate institutional choices, not complex ones**.

National knowledge portal
Innovarurale connects every funded group across regions.

50% advance payments
With simplified costs and pre-call information days.

One set of templates
Standard forms and costs for application and reporting.

Living laboratories
Centres where farmers see results in person.

Innovation agents
Intermediaries between research and producers.

Post-project mentoring
Support at the phase named least supported.

DIFFICULTY PERSISTS IN MATURE SYSTEMS

Despite the success of countries with mature OG ecosystems, some challenges remain in such countries as highlighted by EU level studies. Respondents in version B in the two Member States with the EU's largest portfolios i.e., Italy and Spain still named **post-project exploitation** a hard stage besides difficulties in **consortium creation,** other challenges included expenditure justification, and **by-product versus waste** rules which was also reported in version A responses.

06 Conclusions

The same three difficulties are documented at EU scale across 24 Member States, and in some other national studies in the EU. They are properties of the **instrument** not of the bio-based domain, and not of inexperience.
This matters for what follows. If the difficulties sit in the instrument, they will not be resolved by promoting bio-based topics more energetically or by adding bio-based calls to an unchanged process, and the Commission's 2026 commitment to deliver primary-producer cooperation in bio-based value chains through the European Innovation Partnership would inherit them intact. The same evidence shows they are not immutable: the two Member States with the largest OG portfolios have addressed several of them through **deliberate institutional choices**.

SIX TRANSFERABLE LESSONS

1. Producers in project design, not as test subjects.
2. Early, visible wins before complex innovations.
3. Treat groups as competitiveness instruments, not subsidies.
4. Invest deliberately in intermediaries.
5. Make knowledge visible: demonstration, open data, dissemination.
6. Connect nationally and with peer Member States.

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