



Deliverable 3.7 Inaugural Meeting of the BioBeo Educators' Network for the Future

BioBeo

Innovative Education for the BioEconomy



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Table of Contents

Project factsheet	3
Deliverable factsheet	4
Disclaimer of warranties	5
Abbreviations	6
Executive Summary	7
Welcome to the BioBeo Educators' Network for the Future:	7
Collaborative Framework	7
Future Directions:	8
BioBeo Bioeconomy Definition:	8
Introduction	
BEST Network (all partners)	21
Conclusion	24

Project factsheet

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Disclaimer of warranties

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Abbreviations

E3STEM	Hellenic Education Society of STEM
FEE	Foundation for Environmental Education
IPA	Stichting International Parents Alliance
MU	Maynooth University
OUAS	ODISEE University of Applied Sciences
RUAS	Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TUB	Technical University Berlin
UCD	University College Dublin
UH	University of Hohenheim

Executive Summary

Welcome to the BioBeo Educators' Network for the Future:

The Bioeconomy Educators' Network for the Future (BEST) is a flagship initiative of the BioBeo project, created to establish lasting and meaningful connections between educators committed to bioeconomy education across Europe. Officially launched in March 2025 through the BioBeo Bioeconomy Newsletter (BioBuzz), the BEST network represents a long-term strategic platform to advance educational innovation, pedagogical collaboration, and environmental literacy. It builds on the BioBeo project's core principle of interconnectedness, supporting a community of educators united by the shared goal of embedding bioeconomy concepts within educational practice.

As part of Work Package 3, Task 3.7, the BEST network has achieved significant milestones in its inaugural year:

- **Establishment of a European Educator Network:** With over 400 educators already participating, BEST connects primary and secondary teachers, student teachers, and home educators from Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and beyond. Through a simple subscription to BioBuzz, educators can access curated content, teaching resources, and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Integration into Professional Development:** BEST is closely aligned with the BioBeo Blended Intensive Programme (BIP), which has successfully strengthened educators' understanding of sustainability and bioeconomy. Survey responses show that 87.5% of BIP participants felt better equipped with practical teaching strategies, while 100% expressed a heightened commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship.
- **Facilitation of Cross-Border Collaboration:** The network serves as a primary point of contact between educational institutions across Europe, facilitating the exchange of pedagogical strategies and real-world applications of bioeconomy learning. This aligns with the BioBeo project's emphasis on "phenomenon-based" learning and experiential education.
- **Ongoing Communication and Engagement:** The BEST section within BioBuzz supports regular updates, educator-led initiatives, and innovative approaches to teaching the bioeconomy. Through this platform, members can share case studies, contribute to curriculum development, and participate in an active dialogue on sustainable teaching practices.
- **Future-Oriented Development:** Looking ahead, the BEST network will host its inaugural international conference at Maynooth University in the summer of 2026. This two-day event will welcome educators, researchers, and policy stakeholders for a series of thematic sessions and workshops. Presenters will be invited to submit abstracts for inclusion in a peer-reviewed publication to be launched by the end of 2027, further consolidating the network's role as a centre for excellence in bioeconomy education.

The BEST network embodies the legacy of the BioBeo project: fostering meaningful partnerships, elevating teaching practice, and empowering educators across Europe to lead transformative change in sustainability education. As it continues to grow and evolve, BEST will remain a cornerstone of the movement to embed bioeconomy concepts into classrooms, communities, and curricula for generations to come.

Collaborative Framework

This programme is a collective endeavour involving esteemed institutions, including University College Dublin (Ireland) Maynooth University (Ireland), Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (Netherlands), E3STEM (Greece), Technical University Berlin (Germany), and Odisee University of Applied Sciences (Belgium), University of Hohenheim (Germany) Stichting International Parents Alliance (IPA) and the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE).

Future Directions:

With a strong focus on experiential learning and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the BioBeo Educators' Network for the Future Programme is committed to ongoing evolution. It aims to nurture a generation of environmentally informed global citizens poised to drive the transition toward a sustainable and inclusive bioeconomy.

BioBeo Bioeconomy Definition:

“Bioeconomy is a systems-based approach that seeks to replace fossil resources in a sustainable manner with renewable biological resources from terrestrial and marine ecosystems – such as forests, crops, animals, fish, microorganisms, organic waste, and agricultural side streams, to produce food, feed, fibres, energy, bio-based products, and services within a circular economy framework designed to optimise resource use based on a cascading hierarchy of utilisation options. A sustainable and circular bioeconomy requires the application of education and training programmes, scientific research, technology, and innovation with the aim of not only creating economic value but also regenerating and expanding ecosystems and biodiversity as well as improving the health and the well-being of society. By addressing these systemic changes in the economy, environment, and society, the bioeconomy contributes to achieving a better and more sustainable future where no one is left behind.”

Introduction

Work Package 3, task 3.7. Inaugural Meeting of the BioBeo Educators' Network for the Future.

The objective of Task 3.7 is to establish a long-term, sustainable network of educators across Europe dedicated to promoting bioeconomy education. This initiative builds on the success of the BioBeo Interconnectedness Programme and the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP), fostering collaboration among student teachers, practising educators, and educational institutions. The Bioeconomy Educators' Network for the Future, known as the BEST Network, was officially launched in March 2025 and represents one of the key legacy initiatives of the BioBeo project.

Led by Maynooth University with contributions from UCD, RUAS, Odisee, and other partners, this task aims to sustain the principles of interconnectedness through a growing community of educators in Europe. BEST provides a collaborative platform through the BioBeo Bioeconomy Newsletter (BioBuzz), which facilitates the exchange of resources, pedagogical strategies, and research related to bioeconomy and environmental education. Since its launch, the network has steadily grown and now includes over 400 members across Europe, with a goal of reaching 1,000 by the end of 2025.

As part of its long-term vision, the network will host its first international conference at Maynooth University in the summer of 2026. This two-day event will feature thematic sessions and workshops, welcoming an international audience of educators, researchers, and policy stakeholders. All presenters will be invited to contribute to a peer-reviewed publication following the conference, which is expected to be published by the end of 2027. This publication will document emerging best practices and innovative approaches in bioeconomy education.

In the following section, we provide a detailed overview of the development of the BEST network, its role within the BioBeo project, and the outcomes from its inaugural year.

BEST Network (all partners)

1. Brief Summary of BEST

The BEST network is a community within the BioBeo project that connects bioeconomy and sustainability educators across Europe. Launched in March 2025 through the BioBuzz newsletter, it fosters communication, collaboration, and the sharing of best practices in bioeconomy education. Through the network, educators, including those involved in the BioBeo Blended Intensive Programme, share resources, engage in professional development, and promote the integration of bioeconomy and sustainability into educational settings. The network ensures long-term partnerships, supports continued learning, and disseminates key bioeconomy education information across Europe.

2. Insights on the Development and Implementation of BEST

The Role of BEST in Establishing Initial Connections Among Educational Institutions

The BEST network plays a central role in establishing initial connections among educational institutions across Europe. At the core of the BioBeo Interconnectedness Programme, BEST serves as a platform for the first point of contact, linking schools and universities that are part of the BioBeo consortium. By bringing together diverse educational institutions from Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, and beyond, BEST provides a space where educators can exchange ideas, resources, and teaching strategies. This interconnectedness is vital for the success of the "phenomenon-based" learning approach implemented within the BioBeo project, fostering a collaborative environment where both student teachers and practicing educators can learn from one another.

Through the BioBeo Education Programme, BEST has been able to facilitate direct communication between educators and schools, ensuring the exchange of knowledge on sustainable practices, bioeconomy concepts, and environmental awareness. These connections establish the foundation for ongoing partnerships, laying the groundwork for future collaborations that extend beyond the life of the BioBeo project. The network ensures that the sharing of best practices and resources is not confined to one institution or country, but rather connects a broader European community committed to sustainability education.

Impact of BEST as an Innovative Tool

BEST represents a highly innovative tool in the context of bioeconomy education. The network's strength lies in its ability to foster collaboration among educators and institutions through the Bioeconomy Newsletter (BioBuzz). The newsletter serves as a key vehicle for disseminating educational materials, updates, and important initiatives related to bioeconomy and sustainability, making vital information accessible to a wide range of stakeholders, including primary and secondary school teachers, student teachers, and home educators. Currently we have 400 BEST members across Europe having subscribed through BioBuzz - this number is steadily growing each week. We envisage a community of 1000 members by December 2025.

The network's integration into the Blended Intensive Programme further enhances its impact. By having educators from diverse institutions serve on the BEST steering committee, the network is actively involved in the recruitment of new members and the growth of a community centred around shared learning goals. This inclusivity enables a greater exchange of ideas and resources, with members continuously contributing to discussions around bioeconomy education. BEST has also proved instrumental in addressing key challenges within sustainability education, providing educators with the tools to engage students in real-world experiences that are linked to environmental and economic sustainability.

The role of BEST in fostering cross-border collaboration and its influence on the BioBeo European Festival

also cannot be overstated. By connecting educators from multiple countries, the network helps ensure that students are exposed to global perspectives on bioeconomy, creating an atmosphere where international dialogue thrives. This interconnectedness further reinforces the BioBeo project's goal of increasing awareness and knowledge of the bioeconomy across Europe.

Feedback on How BEST Has Been Received by Educators and Students

The reception of BEST has been overwhelmingly positive among educators, student teachers, and practising teachers. The initial connections made through the BEST network have been invaluable for educators, providing them with access to a diverse range of educational resources, research, and real-world case studies. The opportunity to connect with peers from different countries and share teaching practices has not only enhanced their professional development but also empowered them to implement more effective bioeconomy curricula within their classrooms. Survey results indicate that 87.5% of participants felt better equipped with practical teaching strategies, particularly in integrating outdoor learning and real-world bioeconomy concepts into their teaching. Additionally, 100% of participants reported a stronger commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship, with 81.3% planning to integrate insights learned during BEST activities into their educational practice. The interactive and hands-on approach, including workshops and outdoor activities, was key in making bioeconomy concepts more accessible and actionable for educators.

The BioBeo Blended Intensive Programme, which allows educators to participate in international learning experiences, has been particularly well-received. Teachers who participated in the programme report a greater understanding of how to integrate bioeconomy principles into their teaching, both in terms of content and teaching methods. Additionally, feedback from primary and secondary school students has indicated a strong engagement with the bioeconomy topics covered in the programme, as well as a sense of connection with their peers in other European countries. Students appreciated the interactive learning environment, which emphasised hands-on learning and real-world applications, helping them see the direct impact of the bioeconomy on their communities.

The BioBeo Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) has effectively enhanced educators' understanding and confidence in teaching bioeconomy principles. Survey results indicate a substantial increase in comprehension levels, with the proportion of participants reporting an excellent understanding rising from 12.5% pre-programme to 68.8% post-programme. Additionally, 87.5% of respondents felt well-prepared to implement bioeconomy concepts in their teaching, particularly through outdoor learning and real-world applications. Confidence in explaining bioeconomy concepts also improved, with 81.3% of participants expressing confidence post-programme. In-person sessions were efficient, with 68.8% of participants rating their comprehension and engagement as excellent. Furthermore, 100% of respondents reported that the programme influenced their perspectives on sustainability, leading to more significant efforts to integrate sustainable practices into their personal and professional lives. These statistics underscore the programme's success in fostering knowledge and engagement with bioeconomy topics.

BEST's Contribution to the Overarching Goal of Interconnectedness

The principle of interconnectedness is foundational to the BioBeo project, and BEST plays a pivotal role in bringing this principle to life. By creating a shared space for educators to connect, collaborate, and share resources, BEST embodies the core value of interconnectedness that the BioBeo project seeks to promote. Educators involved in the network not only share knowledge about bioeconomy but also work together to develop innovative educational strategies that promote sustainability education across Europe.

Through its annual BEST meetings and continued engagement via the BioBuzz newsletter, the network ensures that the exchange of ideas remains a continuous process, allowing members to reflect on their practices and make improvements based on new developments in the field of bioeconomy. This ongoing exchange of knowledge has strengthened the collaborative efforts of the BioBeo consortium and increased the visibility of bioeconomy education, positioning it as a key component of the sustainability agenda across European educational systems.

In addition, the inclusive nature of BEST, which encourages participation from a broad range of educators and institutions, strengthens the sense of global interconnectedness. The opportunity for institutions to join the network through simple subscription to the Bioeconomy Newsletter has enabled a growing community of educators who are passionate about teaching sustainability and bioeconomy, thereby expanding the reach of the BioBeo project far beyond the initial partner institutions. This continued engagement ensures that the principles of interconnectedness will persist long after the BioBeo project concludes, creating a lasting impact on sustainability education.

Looking ahead, Maynooth University will host the inaugural BEST Conference in the summer of 2026. This two-day international event will feature multiple sessions on bioeconomy education, immersive pedagogy, and sustainability teaching practices. The event will bring together educators, researchers, and policymakers from across Europe. All presenters will be invited to submit abstracts for inclusion in a peer-reviewed BEST publication, which will be published by the end of 2027. This publication will showcase emerging research and practice in Bioeconomy Education.

The BEST network has proven to be an indispensable tool in fostering collaboration, disseminating important bioeconomy education materials, and promoting interconnectedness among educational institutions across Europe. Through the continued development and implementation of the BEST network, the BioBeo project has successfully established a vibrant and sustainable community of educators committed to advancing sustainability education. As the BEST network grows, it will continue to play a key role in shaping the future of bioeconomy education and ensuring that sustainability concepts are integrated into classrooms across Europe for years to come.

Conclusion

The establishment and evolution of the Bioeconomy Educators' Network for the Future (BEST) marks a significant milestone in the BioBeo project's legacy of fostering meaningful, sustained engagement with bioeconomy education across Europe. From its inception in March 2025, the BEST network has demonstrated the value of cross-border collaboration, shared pedagogical vision, and long-term commitment to equipping educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to cultivate sustainability literacies in their classrooms and communities.

The network's integration with the BioBeo Interconnectedness Programme and the Blended Intensive Programme (BIP) has created a robust platform for professional development, peer exchange, and curriculum innovation. Participation statistics and educator feedback indicate that the network has not only enhanced participants' conceptual understanding of the bioeconomy but also empowered them to integrate bioeconomy into their educational practice meaningfully. These tangible outcomes highlight the unique role that BEST plays as a vehicle for both transformation and continuity in education for sustainable development. With over 400 members and growing the BEST network exemplifies what can be achieved through inclusive and accessible educational networking. Its presence within the BioBuzz newsletter ensures continued

engagement and visibility while its steering committee of committed educators continues to drive strategic growth and participation forward.

Looking to the future, the 2026 BEST Conference, hosted by Maynooth University, will represent a key opportunity to consolidate the network's progress. With multiple thematic sessions and an international audience, the conference will not only facilitate deeper collaboration but also serve as the foundation for a dedicated peer-reviewed publication, further amplifying the impact of BEST's work. As we move toward publication in 2027, this next phase will further solidify the network's academic and practical contributions to the field.

In summary, the BEST network has emerged as a cornerstone of the BioBeo project's ambition to create a more interconnected and bioeconomy-conscious educational landscape. Its legacy will endure through the educators it empowers, the partnerships it sustains, and the generations of students it inspires to engage critically and creatively with the challenges and opportunities of the bioeconomy.