

# European Biofuels Technology Platform

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**Véronique Hervouet**, Chair of the EBTP Steering Committee explains the challenges driving the platform forward and how sustainability plays a central role in all that they do



### What do you see as the mission of the European Biofuels Technology Platform (EBTP)?

The mission of the EBTP is to contribute to the development of cost competitive and world-class technologies to serve the EU markets with a healthy supply of sustainable biofuels. The EBTP achieves this through a process of guidance, prioritisation and promotion of research, technology development and demonstration activities

The EBTP is an open forum gathering biofuels stakeholders active across the whole value chain: feedstock providers, biofuels and bio-energy producers, technology vendors; transportation fuel blenders and marketers, automotive industry, aviation industry, research and technology development organisations and NGOs. Given the complex and wide ranging issues around biofuels and the very different type of industry actors involved with biofuels, developing joint analysis and formulating shared recommendations represents a unique strength of EBTP! The platform is recognised for its balanced guidance to national and EU policy makers, based on high-level scientific and technical expertise, as well as wide-ranging practical industrial and market experience.

### Since it was established in 2006 what has it facilitated? To what extent has it successfully answered its initial objectives?

Let me first briefly explain EBTP's organisation and working modalities: main activities are carried out in specific working groups and task forces under the guidance of a steering committee, with the support of a Secretariat. Stakeholders can register, apply to join working groups, share access to key contacts, internal and external reports, events, opinions and expertise.

One of the main contributions of EBTP has been the publication of its Strategic Research Agenda: it was first presented in January 2008 and the first update has just been released in July 2010. It presents a collective view of the main Research, Development and Demonstration (R&D&D) priorities and accompanying deployment measures required for a successful implementation of sustainable and competitive biofuels in the EU.

Another major activity of EBTP over the last two years has been the shaping of the European Industrial Bioenergy Initiative (EIBI) in the framework of the European Union Strategic Energy Technology Plan (SET Plan). The EIBI aims to accelerate the commercial deployment of advanced technologies that will boost the contribution of sustainable bioenergy to EU 2020 Climate and Energy targets. The initiative is targeting innovative bioenergy value chains that are not yet commercially available, but could be deployed at scale to bring additional large volumes of bioenergy by 2020. EIBI will be launched at the SET Plan conference on 15 November under the Belgian Presidency.

The contribution of EBTP, gathering industry leaders and technology experts to shape this initiative has been essential.

The SRA Update 2010 is also appreciated by the European Commission as a valuable input for the EU R&D framework programme priorities and to support EIBI, as indicated by Raffaele Liberali, Director for Energy at DG Research in a recent letter.

Each year the EBTP holds its Stakeholder Plenary Meeting, gathering a wide audience to discuss key issues related to biofuels R&D&D such as policy, sustainability, feedstock availability, latest developments in the various conversion and end use technologies, on going pilot and demonstration projects and the need for public-private partnerships to finance the latest stages of technology development.

### Could you briefly explain how dependent we are on fossil fuels and describe how the EBTP is encouraging the production and use of sustainable biofuels?

The EU is heavily dependant on fossil fuels, in particular for transport with 98 per cent of road transport fuel using petroleum oil. Increasing the share of biofuels in transport is one of the solutions for the EU to reduce both its dependence on imported oil and green house gases emissions. Local job creation will also be another valuable benefit of developing a healthy biofuels industry in the EU.

The EBTP Working Groups have identified critical areas in which coordinated support for R&D will help to accelerate the deployment of sustainable and competitive biofuels in the EU. Producing more out of the existing feedstock and industrial basis is an obvious way to enlarge the supply of biofuels. Enlarging the feedstock basis with new feedstocks such as residues from agriculture and forestry, industrial and domestic waste streams, energy crops, and aquatic biomass/algae is another complementary option. This requires developing corresponding processing technologies able to convert them into transportation fuels.

Fuel-engine optimisation is another key area. Drop-in biofuels, which are compatible with existing fuel infrastructures and vehicles, offer many advantages. In the longer term, the winning options will be those that best address strategic and sustainability targets, and ensure public and political support for advanced biofuels.

### The European Union has set itself ambitious targets for renewable energy, energy efficiency and greenhouse gas emissions reduction to be met by 2020. In which manner is EBTP contributing to these ambitions and do you think they are achievable?

In addition to ambitious volume targets (10 per cent of transport fuels by 2020 should be renewable) the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) specifies a minimum GHG reduction for existing biofuels production of 35 per cent, rising to 50 per cent from 2017, and 60 per cent for new installations. Together with the Fuel Quality Directive 2009/30/EC (FQD), RED will have a considerable impact on the biofuels landscape in Europe over the next decade. These directives are a challenge for the biofuels industry, but positive since they will boost the most cost efficient technologies and sustainable options, provided the transcriptions of these directives in the Member States offer a level playing field and practical framework.

EBTP is contributing in different ways, first of all by advocating a focused research effort to address the most pressing issues such as increasing the supply of sustainable feedstock and developing tools and data to manage sustainability issues. Also through EIBI, EBTP is pointing at innovative

value chains presenting the potential to deliver significant additional amount of bioenergy (including advanced biofuels) by 2020.

Achievability of EU 2020 biofuels targets do not depend only on technology development and industrial investment, even if these two are critically needed. As indicated already, availability of feedstock is a major issue as enhanced biofuels production will necessitate competing access with other applications such as bioenergy, food and feed, and other industrial uses. Clear, coherent and stable political frameworks as well as relevant public financial support will be critical to back heavy investments in large production facilities, in particular those deploying novel, hence more risky and difficult to finance, technologies.

#### What would you say are the strengths of this platform?

The strength of the EBTP lies in its dedicated, interdisciplinary membership covering the full value chain. The individual involvement of a broad range of stakeholders is a great asset providing a considerable depth of knowledge across all aspects of biofuels. Ongoing networking and cooperation between stakeholders through Working Groups and the Steering Committee is a big strength of the EBTP. Another strong point is close contact with the European Commission. Through mutual cooperation with the EIBI Team, both EBTP members and the European Commission gain an insight into each other's objectives, and an efficient and effective programme for investment in biofuels R&D at the national and European level is being established.

#### How do you see sustainability impacting biofuels? What factors will play a role?

Sustainability is a key challenge for the biofuels industry and a central theme for the EBTP. It is also its best guarantee for a long term and healthy future. Fuelled by recent public debates, the issue of sustainability has been taken up by many different organisations. The recent directives and communications on certification, sustainability criteria and GHG (Green House Gas) calculations, mean that biofuels will become the frontrunner for legally binding sustainability requirements in commercial operations. The EBTP recommends accelerating the development of science-based, rational and transparent criteria, indicators, methodology and data. Such methodology should be applied to the full value chain, from feedstock through conversion processes to the end product. It should be applied to all EU-relevant geographies (ie. production in places relevant to EU-markets for both domestic and imported feedstocks and biofuels) and to the three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, social and economic). For sustainability regulations to deliver meaningful benefits, criteria need to be applied equally to all uses of biomass (food, feed, energy and industrial products).

#### As part of Knowledge Based Bio-Economy (KBBE) initiatives you interact with other Technology Platforms. Who have you collaborated with and what have these partnerships produced?

As part of Knowledge Based Bio-Economy (KBBE) initiatives, the EBTP works closely with related European Technology Platforms (ETPs) to

identify gaps and synergies in R&D&D. Collaboration takes place via mutual representation in committees and interaction at conferences and workshops. Currently the EBTP participates in the BeCoTeps project, which addresses areas of common interest for ETPs active in the KBBE area. BeCoTeps is preparing a white paper with key recommendations for the bioeconomy.

EBTP also participates in the Star-COLIBRI (Strategic Research Targets for 2020 – Collaboration Initiative on Biorefineries) project, which aims to promote collaboration between complementary research projects in the field of biorefineries, and to develop a biorefinery vision and roadmap.

The EBTP also contributes extensively to consultations on the availability and certification of sustainable bioenergy feedstocks, including lignocellulosic materials and novel biomass resources, such as algae.

#### Would you like to add anything else about the work of the EBTP?

Biomass is the sole renewable source of energy able to substitute any energy vectors serving main energy uses: liquid (in particular for transportation), heat and electricity. Biofuels are so far the only commercially deployed renewable alternative to petroleum for transport, and should remain so for some time. Biofuels production covers a very diverse range of feedstock and technologies options, and the market for biofuels covers a wide range of end uses: road vehicles, air, rail and marine for passengers, freight and the military. Hence biomass and biofuels are both critical to our energy future. They do however pose considerable challenges due to their inherent complexity, the corresponding diversity of actors and the often conflicting policy issues at stake (energy, transport, agriculture, climate, environment, rural development etc).

In order to deal with their inherent complexity, it is essential to ensure both a broad view for the analysis of the issues at stake and a pragmatic and focused approach regarding concrete actions. The value chain method used by EBTP to identify EIBI priorities and prepare its implementation plan is one example of applying EBTP's strength to an important and challenging issue.

The EBTP is based on the voluntary work of its members and is thus thankful for the huge support and commitment provided by its stakeholders.

[www.biofuelstp.eu](http://www.biofuelstp.eu)



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