



Pilots4U Policy Recommendations

The Pilots4U network set up a free online database that lists European pilot-, demonstration-, and tolling-equipment for the scale-up of various bio-economy processes. This equipment is operated by several companies and institutes that work in an open access mode. The Pilots4U database currently contains 451 entries from 82 organisations in 20 countries and has 474 page views monthly (this figure is the average from the last two months).

Open access pilot and demonstration infrastructures allow industry to bring bio-economy innovations from the laboratory into industrial practice. They are open to all companies and research institutes and offer a wide range of innovative, state-of-the-art equipment and expertise. Early stage collaboration with such facilities substantially lowers the financial risk for the innovating company, by reducing the need for investment in a significant scale and an associated range of equipment, providing access to expertise in processing technology at scale, and as a result speeds up the commercialisation of their new product or process.

Typically, large-scale innovation infrastructures have very high initial cost and then require further investment and maintenance costs to retain capability. Therefore, supporting innovation policies at a regional, as well as at a European level, is of utmost importance to safeguard the long-term existence of these innovation accelerators, to support the delivery of highly skilled jobs.

The Pilots4U project has the following key messages with the aim to strengthen the European landscape of open-access infrastructure:

- The number of assets currently included in the Pilots4U database show that Europe already has significant open access pilot and demo facilities. The gap analysis executed within the framework of the Pilots4U project did not reveal a shortage in facilities as such, in terms of capability to meet industry needs, but rather a strong need to further strengthen and invest in existing open access infrastructures to keep them state-of-the-art and increase flexibility. It should be noted that this is applicable to most areas of Europe, with the exception of Eastern Europe, where a very small number of open access pilot/demo facilities were identified and therefore, new centres may be required in the future.
- To maximise the investments in and the potential of the existing facilities, Pilots4U strongly argues for a better mobility of funding across Europe, especially on a cross-regional basis, by extending the remit of existing regional funding mechanisms. Companies must be able to gain access to the equipment and expertise they need across Europe. Pilot facilities, wherever they are located, should be accessible to all European companies/SMEs using regional funding. This will contribute to create a Europe for business! We need to create the policies that ensure Europe is truly business focused, breaking down the parochial barriers that currently hamper the movement of resources, skills and finance, reducing capital efficiency and risking duplication of effort and investment.
- Furthermore, the gap analysis showed that the potential of existing open access infrastructure in Europe could be optimised, and risks of duplication minimised, by the creation of collaborative networks that own complementary infrastructures within a specific value chain, that could be used to facilitate co-working. The creation of the Pilots4U Network is an important first step in this direction.

- The gap analysis also detected a need to address knowledge gaps that currently hinder the development of bio-based technology, particularly related to issues encountered when delivering scale-up. Research projects oriented to solve scale-up knowledge gaps should be funded to build the knowledge base among experts, increase the pool of expertise and stimulate the development of bio-based technologies.
- Ensuring the Pilots4U database remains active and up to date will maximise the impact of the abovementioned recommendations, but this requires investments in time and effort. Pilots4U are examining opportunities to secure a mix of public and private support to back such efforts, which will contribute to delivering the above highlighted benefits.

It is the Pilots4U partnership's intention to continue the network beyond the project end date. As the negotiations for the new governance structure and financial model for the Pilots4U network will go on beyond the project end date, the Pilots4U project partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the aim to ensure the continuation of the network negotiations and the maintenance of the minimum services needed to keep the database functional and up-to-date until a new structure is up and running.