PROGRAM Day 1: 30 November 2026

13:15 – 13:30: OPENING

*by Organiser **Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant** supported by "The ProteInn Club" and "Pilots4U powered by CoPilot"*
Moderator: Stef Denayer, Stakeholder Relations Manager Pilots4U

13:30 – 15:35 KEYNOTE SESSION: The European Bioeconomy in 2026: Sink or Swim?

13:30 – 14:30: PART 1: Successful Deployment of Industrial Biotechnology Business Cases.

In this part of the keynote, we want to inspire our ecosystem by showcasing successes based on reality, not on pipe dreams. Both a start-up and a corporate will share details on their scale-up journey and production plans with focus on the success factors, the hurdles and how to overcome them, and how to handle the shift from "Green is the Dream" to "Techno-Economics is the Name of the Game". This part will be concluded by a panel discussion adding contributions by an investor and a pilot facility to the discussion.

13:30 – 13:35 **Introduction**
*by moderator **Melina Gerdts**, bioCircular Loop*

13:35 – 13:50 **Keynote Presentation by a Start-up, Title tbd**
***Maija Itkonen**, CEO & Co-Founder Onego Bio, FI*

13:50 – 14:05 **Steelanol: When microbiology meets steel; Scaling Innovation in the Real World**
***Kristof Verbeeck**, Business Development & Strategic Partnerships, ArcelorMittal Belgium*

14:05 – 14:30 **Panel Discussion 1: "Feet on the ground" proves to be a key driver for successful commercialisation of industrial biotechnology innovations**
*Moderated by **Melina Gerdts**, bioCircular Loop*
Panellists:
***Maija Itkonen,** CEO & Co-Founder Onego Bio, FI*
***Kristof Verbeek**, Business Development & Strategic Partnerships, ArcelorMittal Belgium*
***Wouter Van de Putte,** Investment Director, Capricorn Partners*
***Hendrik Waegeman,** Business Operations Manager Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant*

14:30 – 14:35
Short Engaging Reflections & Q&A with co-organiser DI Biosolutions
Speaker: Mikael Wraae Valsted, Head of DI Biosolutions
Moderator: Stef Denayer, Stakeholder Relations Manager Pilots4U

14:35 – 15:25: PART 2: Panel Discussion 2: The 2026 Toolbox: Will it Turn the Tide for the Bioeconomy Sector?

With the launch of the new bioeconomy strategy late last year, the European Commission has shifted its focus towards industrial deployment, market scale-up, competitiveness, and resilience. Various support mechanisms have since been established to bridge the innovation gap between the laboratory and commercial-scale production, improve the appetite of private investors and stimulate market demand for bio-based products. The key question, however, is whether these instruments will be capable of delivering tangible results in the near term?

14:35 – 14:45 **Introduction and Presentation of the Panel Members**
*by moderator **Melina Gerdts**, bioCircular Loop*

14:45 – 15:25 **Panel Discussion**
*Moderated by **Melina Gerdts**, bioCircular Loop*
Panellists:
***Kristin Schreiber, tbc**, Director for Chemicals, Health, Retail and Agrifood, DG GROW, European Commission*
***Agata Kotkowska**, Deputy Head of the Bioeconomy & Sustainable Materials, DG ENV, European Commission*
***Mikael Wraae Valsted**, Head of DI Biosolutions*
***Annick Verween**, Head of "biotope by VIB"*
***Philippe Mengal,** Executive Director, Bio-based Industries Consortium (BIC)*

FLANDERS INVESTMENT & TRADE ghent:	15:25 – 15:35 **Short Engaging Reflections & Q&A with co-organisers Flanders Investment & Trade and Stad Gent - Invest in Ghent** *Speaker FIT: TBC* *Speaker Stad Gent: Dieter De Smedt, Manager of Economic Development* *Moderator: Stef Denayer, Stakeholder Relations Manager Pilots4U*

15:35 – 16:05 Investor High Tea

kindly offered by Flanders Investment and Trade

British Embassy Brussels	16:05 – 16:10 **Short Engaging Reflections & Q&A with co-organiser Science & technology Network, British Embassy Brussels** *Speaker, TBC* *Moderator: Stef Denayer, Stakeholder Relations Manager Pilots4U*

16:10 – 17:10 Investor Reverse Pitch Session 1: The Corporate Investors POV

Moderator: Hendrik Waegeman, Business Operations Manager, Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant

16:10 – 16:20 **The value of "external" innovation: A corporate perspective**
***Timothy Wallace**, Head Corporate Scouting & Assessment, Novonesis A/S*
16:20 – 16:30 **Title to be confirmed**
***Eva Wilke**, Vice President White Biotechnology Research, BASF*
16:30 – 16:40 **Dow's corporate venturing : A collaborative exploration & investment partner**

***Joost Waeterloos**, Corporate Technology Scout, DOW*

16:40 – 17.10 **Q&A** with the audience

BOM	17:10 – 17:15 **Short Engaging Reflections & Q&A with co-organiser Brabantse Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij** *Speaker: Daan van Lange, Senior Investment Manager Climate Tech* *Moderator: Stef Denayer, Stakeholder Relations Manager Pilots4U*

17:15 – 17:45 Investor Appetite Drink with drinks and bites

kindly offered by Brabantse Ontwikkelingsmaatschappij

17:45 – 18:45 Investor Reverse Pitch Session 2: The VC POV

Moderator: Hendrik Waegeman, Business Operations Manager, Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant

17:45 – 17:55 **How your pitch looks from the other side of the table**

***Mariam Cherifi**, Associate at Sofinnova Partners*

17:55 – 18:05 **Title to be confirmed**

***Joy Faucher**, Partner at Forbion Bioeconomy*

18:05 – 18:15 **Title to be confirmed**

***Speaker tbc**, European Circular Bioeconomy Fund*

18:15 – 18.45 **Q&A** with the audience

planet b.io	18:45 – 18:50 **Short Engaging Reflections & Q&A co-organiser Planet b.io** *Speaker: Cindy Gerhardt, Managing Director Planet-B.io* *Moderator: Stef Denayer, Stakeholder Relations Manager Pilots4U*

18:50 – 18:55 Surprise Act *moderated by Stef Denayer*

18:55 – 19:00 Intro to an evening of matchmaking and networking

*By **Philippe Mengal**, Executive Director, Bio-based Industries Consortium*

19:00 – 21:00 Informal Walking Dinner

kindly supported by Bio-based Industries Consortium

Enjoy a tasty and copious informal walking dinner, included in the registration fee of Day 1.

19:45 – 20:15 Speed Dating Session 1

20:30 – 21:00 Speed Dating Session 2

Expand your network rapidly by enjoying five surprise one-on-one conversations in just 30 minutes. Max. 60p. per session, register via registration form.

21:00 – 23:00 Pitch Perfect Networking After-Drink

19:00 – 23:00 Pre-booked 1-on-1 Matchmaking Ongoing