The European Commission has launched a **new three-year project** "**Bio Base NWE**" to support the development of the
bio-based economy
in
North West Europe
(NWE).

The €6.2 million (£5.35 million) project will work mainly with small and medium businesses (SME's) to help facilitate innovation and business development in bio-based technologies. Bio Base NWE will also provide training and education to help tackle the shortage of skilled professionals in North West Europe's bio-based industries. The Bio Base NWE partnership includes organisations from five different countries.

Dr. Lieve Hoflack, Manager of the Bio Base NWE project, said: "SME's have a vital role to play in Europe's journey towards the bio-based economy, which could be worth more than €2 trillion to the European economy by 2020." "Bio-based products are a growing area of interest for SME's working in chemical industry, agro-industry, plastics, fuels, food, textile and pharma industry. However, many SME's find it difficult to bridge the gap between newly developed research and the commercial market," she adds.

The Bio Base NWE network, representing many leading bio-based economy experts, will advise SME's from across North West Europe on how to develop new ideas into marketable products. SME's can get financial support to demonstrate innovative bio-based technologies at an independent, state-of–the-art demonstration facility in Ghent, Belgium. This

flexible pilot plant will selectively invest in equipment for promising technologies to promote further growth. The partnership will also develop and deliver programmes and tools for training skilled professionals for bio-based industries.

North West Europe is in an excellent position to take a leading role in the emerging bio-based economy. The region is home to a number of prominent research institutes in this field and has a leading chemical industry, including a strong representation of SME's which can provide a springboard for future development.