

# **D.T4.2.2**

## **Feedback reports on Co-Creation workshops**

### **Project region**

Acronym of the authoring partner/-s according AF  
IFKA / 2022



### Project Information

Project Title: GoDanuBio - 'Participative Ecosystems for fostering the revitalization of rural-urban cooperation through governing Danube Circular Bioeconomy'

Project code: DTP3-471-4.1

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### *Disclaimer:*

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## 1. General information about the co-creation workshop

Date of the workshop	31.08.2022 08.09.2022 21.09.2022
Topic of the workshop	VidékLátó (VL, ~Rural Watch) programme definition
Format of the workshop	Online, via Zoom
Region/Adress	Hungary
Project partner(s) involved	IFKA
Guiding question/theme of the workshop	What is the joint vision we have for the programme? How do we foresee the programme rolling out? What would enable easy and effective monitoring?
Number of participants	8 (plus 5 bilateral interviews)
Type of participants (Target groups) <sup>1</sup> and name of institutions	Rural municipality actors (Alsómocsolád (Baranya County), rural regional networks (Abaúj LAG (Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén county) Alpokalja-Fertőtáj LAG (Győr-Moson-Sopron county, Kunbábonyi Tízek (Bács-Kiskun county) policymakers from Ministry of Agriculture and National Rural Network
Cooperation with experts (i.e. speakers, external moderators, politician...)	Mr Márton Beke rural development and community activation expert Ms Anikó Soltész Social Economy expert

## 2. Objective of the workshop

*Describe your objective of the workshop in detail. What outputs did you expect? Why did you follow this objective? Did you rather want to strengthen your local / regional circular (bio)economy? Did the event have a specific focus on rural areas, or on rural-urban cooperation? Did you do your best to engage representatives of local and regional administration in the workshop?*

The objective of the workshop series was to capitalize on the emergent proposals from the expert panel in March, and **draw up an intervention concept** to be either inserted into the current rural development policies or to test it further in a pilot project. The key idea grasped on was the concept of “Watch Tours”, study trips organized bilaterally between

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<sup>1</sup> Please group the target groups according to the ones listed in page 42 of the Application Form

municipalities, and occasionally between LAGs to study solutions for common (or previously common) issues, good practices and of course, build an organic rural network. As these very much stem from an intrinsic development drive, they help activate the local communities, and dynamise local **participative governance initiatives**.

This however is only the first step in the programme concept, as with the insertion of an active adaptation/mentoring and an implementation phase, these WatchTours generate direct social and economic benefits, which, judging by the preliminary interviews would often include green/bio challenges as well. Thus, it is expected that the program can be utilized as a visibility/motivation tool for the so-far low-level **sustainability-conscious rural development**.

The representatives of potential beneficiaries both municipal and network-level, experts and policymakers were invited to participate on an even footage. Participation rates varied though – more on this later, as this is one of the lessons learned.

### **3. Initial situation of your region**

*(If you do have three consecutive workshops dealing on the same topic, this chapter can be filled out only once for all workshops)*

*What was the starting situation of your region and why did you choose this topic for your co-creation workshop(s)? How high was the pressure of the stakeholders for change? Describe the framework conditions in your region and what you expect from the co-creation workshop(s)?*

Rural development has been out of policy focus recently, and existing resources were clustered around larger high-visibility infrastructural projects (roads and building renovation mostly). The underlying issues keep festering though which result in most rural targets rapidly losing perspective, vision and competitiveness – and even those that manage to set examples are not visible or networked to spread. There is therefore a growing latent demand for easy, practical and often cheap solutions to common issues across the board. The three key areas which struggling organisations see as crucial for their progress are the dynamization of the local community, competitiveness of the rural economy and mending the social network.

As per the preliminary interviews it was an important and widespread notion that the issue is often not the funds themselves, although scarcity is an obvious problem, but trust, know-how and often even motivation. In plain English, “what should I do, how and why” is a much more pertinent question than simply financial support.

At the same time all stakeholders confirmed the existence of numerous little-used and unmaintained good practice databases, national support networks with lofty goals and misaligned indicators and often struggling bottom-up initiatives trying to fill the competence void. This naturally means that any potential solution not to fall flat needs to capitalize on existing resources, reinforce local momentum without being patronizing or overbearing, and work to connect the existing dots, islands of activities within the country.

By inviting all actors in the situation to the workshop the expectation was to find the overlapping heart of the Venn-diagram, if it exists, and come up with a concept, which is still broad, yet specific enough stay effective when worked into any currently existing support framework. Similarly, it was an explicit goal of the series to link up the actors in a creative environment in order to ease further cooperation in an partnership setting of equals.

#### 4. Methods used within the workshop

*Explain in detail which method(s) you used within the workshops. How did it work? Why did you choose this method(s)? What was the output of the method(s)? Would you recommend this method(s) and why/why not?*

All workshops were organized with a clear agenda and a structured methodology, which kept the contributions flowing but also on point. Apart from the single facilitator all participants had equal status and a unified mission, considering the same issue from different angles.

The series was structured in a way to start from high-level notions and dig continuously deeper towards the specifics.

**Session 1** focused on creating a **joint vision** of the initiative through **mindmapping**. Offering up the lessons from the March expert panel, a shared digital mindmap<sup>2</sup> was drawn and expanded. The mindmap had two visually contrasted sides juxtaposing a strategic and a process view of the initiative. The **strategic side** detailed **targets/beneficiaries**, goals and **actions, success criteria** (“wants”) and **pitfalls** (“don’t wants”).



The **process side** detailed the five stages of the cyclic concept from **inspiration**/good practice selection, through the **WatchTour** itself, a **mentored adaptation** process and the

<sup>2</sup> Platform used for real-time shared cooperation: Miro

**implementation** of the adapted initiative to the **propagation**/dissemination of the results and starting the cycle anew for new practices and new candidates.

The session was kept relatively freeform, the job of the facilitator was only to ensure that all participants contributed, all topics were touched on, and that possible controversies were marked clearly with their conceptual roots exposed if possible.

**Session 2** focused on **expanding the process aspects** of the concept by working the strategic considerations into the stages of activity. The tool chosen for this session was a real-time collaborative version of a presentation<sup>3</sup> with structure and trivial points given but blanks left for specifics and controversial points. Each of the 5 phases needed practical/logistical **parameters, cost estimation, objectives, outputs, results, and activities** to be both **anticipated**/encouraged and **forbidden**/discouraged.

In this session the facilitator played a more active role by probing for limitations and tacit expectations and making sure that (a) the success criteria and pitfalls of the previous session were all showcased and elaborated and (b) that the markedly different perspectives of rural actors and policy experts were equally represented and if possible, brought to consensus.

It was expected that this exercise would be too long for the allotted timeframe, therefore the document was circulated in the communication platform<sup>4</sup> encouraging further additions.

The topic chosen for **session 3** was selected to develop third-party empathy – and to round out the area least touched on in S2, indicators. In the area of **monitoring** and expected, **measurable results** both sides (i.e., funding and beneficiary) needed to balance their positions and appreciate their counterpart. The methodology chosen for this was originally foreseen to be a version of **OPERA**, in which pairs of actors would have had time to discuss the measurability and expectations of each of the five phases, come up with joint proposals for each, and share it in the plenary, putting the pieces together. Due to the fact that participation turned out to be way sparser than expected however, the issues were all covered in a **moderated plenary discussion**, with comparable results.

After the 3 sessions a concept draft is drawn up to be worked on further.

## 5. Lessons learned for next upcoming workshops

*The lessons learned will be assessed and considered for the next workshop round.*

1. It was originally expected that the **policy side would be more difficult to engage**, and this proved sadly true. Most of the policy experts, even among those that were willing and eager to participate in bilateral discussions on the topic and are truly curious about the outcomes of the workshop series turned reticent when encouraged to take part in the sessions. In a number of cases this was eminently due to fear of saying something out of line or of being ganged up on by disgruntled beneficiaries. In others, there was a latent, though tangibly perceived power distance

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<sup>3</sup> Google Slides

<sup>4</sup> Facebook group

between themselves and both beneficiaries and experts, making it impossible to mix with them on equal footing. All these factors resulted in low policy-side participation. At the same time, most policy experts are eager to review the results of the concept and receive validated, direct communication from the field, but it seems that for now a middleman needs to be inserted to ferry ideas and demand between the two banks of the river. This outsider missionary expert position is very much personal though, yet their role is apparently more important than ever.

2. Most **beneficiaries have a firm grasp on fairness** and are willing to go to great lengths to ensure proper and effective implementation as long as they are not made to jump through unnecessary hoops. They also have a keen sense of **programme exploitability**, and often have great ideas for discouraging 'hacks' to the system ('white hat', if you will). Judging from the policy side responses this notion alone was worth the effort of organizing the series and can start the parties down a path of more trustful collaboration.
3. Any programme needs to consider the limited resources, notably **time and manpower of the GP hosts**. They are Good Practice hosts *because* they work a lot with their communities and keep innovating to make the most of their limited means. Therefore while they are more than happy to share their results and knowledge, their commitment to the home turf must be respected by the programme, and by necessity, the learning/mentoring trips need to be limited. This necessitates an organic rollout of any concept with the adapters becoming mentors in the following rounds themselves.
4. **Trust** is generally a key component to the success of the programme, and cannot be compensated for by regulation and certification. Both between beneficiaries, regarding experts and as noted above, between the policy and implementation levels, trust levels have deteriorated and they need to be built back through conscious gestures and shows of trust and mutual work. It is appreciated that this is a rather soft and very difficult-to-codify aspect, but at this point it is believed that this single point will make or break not just the rural or rural-urban relations, but the Hungarian municipality concept as such.

## 6. What did the local or/and regional administration and the citizens expect from the process of participative governance?

*(If you do have three consecutive workshops dealing on the same topic, this chapter is to be filled out once at the end of all workshops)*

*What did the local and/or regional administration expect from your workshop(s) (according to your discussions beforehand and in the workshops) and could you fulfill these expectations? What did the citizens (if you do had workshops with citizens) expect from the workshop as far as you could*

Municipalities, LAGs and local networks expected a possibility to talk directly with the policy side. They also hoped to see a programme concept tailored to their actual needs. The first expectation was partially met, as noted above, while with the second half they were

generally satisfied. From the feedback provided they are looking forward to reviewing a more advanced version of the concept and participating in the development of a pilot.

The expectations of the experts involved were focused on testing new ideas and extending their networks. Both of these expectations are apparently fulfilled, and all involved experts are keen to keep working on the project.

Policymakers expected first-hand information on the demands and needs of the potential beneficiaries, which they received. As long as the channel can be kept open, they are interested in receiving further input in case they would be in a position to act on it.

## 7. Outcome of the co-creation workshops

*(If you do have three consecutive workshops dealing on the same topic, this chapter is to be filled out once at the end of all workshops)*

*What are the outcomes of the workshop(s)? Please describe if all the participants were satisfied with the outcome of the workshops. Please specify the outcomes in the table. Do you think the workshop(s) lead to an the increase of institutional capacity for local/regional administration?*

*Fulfill this table with the outcomes (you can add columns if you need)*

Outcome:	Name:	Stakeholder involved:	Expected duration:	Field of action (bioeconomy in general /rural development/urban rural cooperation)
Initiative	RuralWatch programme	Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Interior, municipalities	5 years	rural dev
Project idea	RuralWatch INTERREG Danube project	IFKA, Westpannon, et al	3 years	rural dev with a green focus
Network	RuralWatch fb group	Westpannon, all	indefinite	rural dev

*Explain your outcomes (initiatives/ideas/projects etc.) in detail.*

*Who is connecting/coordinating these different outputs? What are the next steps? Who is going to finance the following steps?*

The main outcome from the workshop series is the RuralWatch programme concept. In its current format it is already in a state where some elements can be implemented into domestic support programmes (managed by the Ministry of Interior) with minimal friction, and also fit the goals and key parameters of the LEADER programme (managed by the Project co-funded by the European Union Funds (ERDF and IPA)

Ministry of Agriculture). So far neither of the two funding agencies committed to actual implementation of the programme, but both expressed interest in learning more of it. This is what actually lead to the formulation of the INTERREG project concept. At the same time, both actors agree that if they get around to implementing the concept, they are to run it for a non-trivial length of time with several rounds of application in order to test the organic propagation.

The concept itself details the goals and the flow of activities and milestones from phase to phase, and defines some pointers for expert selection, communication, evaluation and monitoring. Project sizes are very much guesstimates at this point.

The idea to test the RuralWatch programme concept in a macroregional setting was raised during the 3<sup>rd</sup> workshop and found a surprising amount of traction with the stakeholders. There is a good rationale both in gathering experiences from around the region and in testing the system's interregional applicability.

The Facebook group for the workshops emerged from the need to share handouts and keep communication up between sessions, but it has actually brought in more members than just the workshop participants, so for the time being it is maintained as an easy-to-join, easy-to-use and highly accessible information platform. We are waiting to see if it gains traction and fulfils the demand for community, visibility and up-to-date information showcased in the workshops, which will make or break its future. If it proves active, then it can be maintained indefinitely for bottom-up rural development cooperation.

## **8. Innovation potential for your region**

*(If you do have three consecutive workshops dealing on the same topic, this chapter is to be filled out once at the end of all workshops)*

*Provide the big picture of the innovation potential in your region by interconnecting ideas/initiatives/projects identified via the co-creation workshops. How could the innovative power of the region be increased through participative governance? Were future scenarios identified and strategies developed to increase the attractiveness of rural areas? Were future cooperations and strategies for urban-rural cooperation developed?*

The RuralWatch concept very much aims to increase the viability, dynamism and attractiveness of rural areas. By focusing on not just finding the exact ideas and tools for a settlement's problems, but learning from personal experience, developing a live competence network and consciously adapting the solutions for maximum impact with the help of both peer mentors and expert facilitators are structured to release intrinsic creativity and foster social and economic innovation within the communities.

Already during the workshop discussions the new contacts were utilized and personal feedback tells of at least one newly inspired WatchTour under organization.

## **9. Strengths and weaknesses of the process of participative governance**

*(If you do have three consecutive workshops dealing on the same topic, this chapter is to be filled out once at the end of all workshops)*

*Describe your experiences: What are the strengths of participative governance in a decision-making process of the appointed topic/region? What were your problems in involving different people and stakeholders in the process of finding solutions? Does the workshop improve the skills of the local and/or regional administration, in regards to institutional capacity?*

Participative governance tools only work if the power imbalance between the parties can be temporarily negated and a trusting, cooperative atmosphere can be built up. As soon as either party is shaken out of this mindset, the cognitive dissonance becomes too great, and an often-contagious resistance kicks in. Therefore, as the participants correctly appreciated, these tools are great to use in small communities, where issues overlap and power distances are rarely great enough to cause tension, or in consciously managed settings. In smaller communities, especially if participative governance is often used, even the additional time, communication and organization decreases to the point of negligibility.

A highly bureaucratic structure will be reluctant to participate in such activities despite the potential benefits, but in case there are individuals within the system that manage to break out of the bureaucratic constraints, they may act as contact points, interpreters, and missionaries, keeping up the motivation to open up.

## **10. Do you plan to use the process of participative governance also in future?**

*(If you do have three consecutive workshops dealing on the same topic, this chapter is to be filled out once at the end of all workshops)*

*Do you already have concrete plans on how and when you are going to use participative governance in your region? In which topics do you plan to involve the general public in future? Are you willing to motivate policy makers to further use participatory governance and the presented methods?*

*For public bodies (Ministries,...): Are you planning to regularly involve the public in decision making in your region?*

Definitely. For us the investment in time and resources was definitely worth the benefit in network strength, in the amount of new ideas and aspects, and in the specific new avenues of policy influencing. Promoting co-creation as a local development tool for municipalities is also feasible and can be disseminated both as a good practice and as actual competence development.

## **11. Identified opportunities for rural development in your region**

*(If you do have three consecutive workshops dealing on the same topic, this chapter is to be filled out once at the end of all workshops)*

*What opportunities did you identify to tackle demographic change? What opportunities did you identify for rural development in your region? How could urban-rural cooperation work according to your experiences in the workshops? Did the workshop empower lively rural areas in your region? If not, what was missing? What need to be done?*

1. Municipalities generally accept that the dynamism and visibility of a village community contributes to its demographic outlook, but they vary wildly on the degree of this contribution. Active municipalities use their community activity to improve governance, competitiveness, and social responsibility as well. Learning from each other is seen as a highly trustworthy and effective source of competence development, but the flaky, fragmented network structure results in underutilization of this opportunity.

It is a pervasive notion both among municipal and local network actors that centrally coordinated development drives often fall short on two accounts: (1) the amount of paperwork, quality control and guideline-adherence is seen as prohibitive in comparison with the size and perceived benefits of the project, and (2) the experts involved in central initiatives often start out with little to no local trust, and many squander even that through initial condescension. Any programme wanting to make a significant impact needs to address these issues.

Beneficiaries see inherent value in WatchTours thanks both to their personalized setups and their “one of us”-stamped trustworthiness. Building organically on this positive attitude, then supporting the adaptation and implementation process with just enough external facilitation to assure, but not claim success seems to be the way forward in this delicate situation.

2. All stakeholders would value more opportunities for inspiration, preferably personally. A regular semiannual meetup is therefore contemplated with thematic workshops as a prelude to each call for learning. Among the thematic preferences energy-efficiency, community-sourcing and competence development rank the highest. The inclusion of the community college system was raised here as a potential independent depository and dissemination body of knowledge.

The issue of urban-rural cooperation is raised and evaded; large cities are rarely experienced as partners. Participants would prefer entering into cooperation in a less imbalanced and biased position.

New avenues of local development (digitalization on the one hand and caring for/uplifting local poor) are explored during the discussion and added to the mindmap. Good practices are already mentioned.

3. The session did not deal explicitly with new opportunities as much as finetuning previously identified ones. One key notion was that the stakeholders actually found preferential treatment in SF projects a hindrance for development in some cases, and managed to pinpoint a workaround.

The thought process was that the issues to be solved within the RuralWatch scheme vary a lot in implementation cost and project size – e.g., the formation of a permanent ‘youth municipality’ exists on a completely different level from the establishment of, say, a windfarm to help with the greening on the village. As per the original idea a beneficiary would either receive a relatively small amount for implementation of small projects or extra evaluation points and preference in specific SF calls. The consensus was though that this latter tool would backfire, as all prospective applicants for those large projects would pounce on RuralWatch and bleed it dry without real impact just to get at the preferential points. Therefore a

solution was offered that in case the intervention required more support than the RuralWatch ballpark, then the implementation support would be used to hire professional help in preparation for a top-quality application.

## **12. Annexes**

Agenda of the co-creation workshop, invitation of the workshop

Pictures of the workshop

Press releases of the workshop (in case available)

Record your workshops or take interviews in / after the workshops with your participants

**Feladó:** Gál Körmendy <gal.kormendy@westpannon.hu>  
**Küldve:** kedd 2022. augusztus 30 1:34  
**Címzett:** Gál Körmendy  
**Tárgy:** GoDanuBio VidékLátó műhelysorozat meghívó

Tisztelt Hölgyek és Urak, kedves kollégák a magyar vidék szolgálatában!

Az IFKA, úgy is mint a GoDanuBio európai együttműködési projekt magyarországi partnere nevében ehelyt tisztelettel meghívom Önöket, hogy vegyenek részt a **VidékLátó online műhelysorozat** alkalmain.

A GoDanuBio a Duna-menti térségben vizsgálja alapvetően annak lehetőségeit, hogy mi módon lehet a **vidéki kistelepüléseket, térségeket** az egyes országokban fenntartható, **vonzó helyé** tenni, adott esetben a **községi kormányzás és a körkörös gazdaság** támogatásával. A témában idén márciusban többük részvételével folytattunk már egy szakértői panelbeszélgetést, amelynek eredményeit most itt az idő és a lehetőség továbbgondolni. Abból a panelbeszélgetésből a lehangosabb, legkonkrétabb gondolat egyértelműen a **"látóutak"**, többnapos buszos tanulmányutak egy inspiráló másik településre, illetve az azok alapján megvalósuló helyi kezdeményezések koncepciója volt. Ezt a gondolatot hivatott a műhelysorozat a szakpolitikai, támogatói oldal képviselőivel közösen kifejtetni és **támogatási programokba illeszthető formába önteni**.

A három műhelyalkalom az előzetes telefonos egyeztetésekben elhangzottaknak megfelelően ezen a héten kezdődik, és a következő két hétben folytatódik. Az első alkalom időpontja az egyeztetések alapján **augusztus 31 szerda 1300-1600** között lesz. A második-harmadik alkalmak pontos időszóját szerdán pontosíthatjuk, ellenvetés hiányában szintén szerda délutánonként kerülne rájuk sor.

A három esemény tematikája a terveink szerint a következőképp alakul:

- I. - Vízio: Igények, szükségletek és lehetőségek - A koncepció fő elemeinek, úgy mint (a) utazás/tapasztalatsere, (b) koncepciófejlesztés/mentorálás, (c) próbaprojektek megvalósítása és (d) tudástárolás/tudásmegosztás a kifejtése, egységes vízio felvázolása. Mire van leginkább szükség, mi teszi ezt vonzóvá? Mire nincs feltétlenül szükség? Fő témák és megvalósulási szintek. Mik a fő támogatási lehetőségek, hazaiak és európaiak egyaránt?
- II. - Peremfeltételek és értékvédelem- Támogatási alapelvek, elvárások, illetve az ezeknek való megfelelés. Van-e a víziónak olyan eleme, ami nem fér be sehová? Hogyan fogható meg egy ilyen komplex és nyílt kezdeményezés úgy, hogy ne bonyolódjon lehetetlenné, de ne is legyen könnyen meghackelhető? Vagyis hogy a a célközönségnek és csak a célközönségnek jelentsen támogatást és inspirációt, nekik viszont elegendőt, és ne szűkítse túl a lehetőségeket?
- III. - Útvonaltervezés - Időtávok, szereplők, lehetőségek - konkrétumok, amennyire csak lehet

Bíztatok és bátorítok mindenkit, hogy facebookon jelentkezzen be a Vidéklátó csoportba, ahol az események előtt, között és után folyamatosan és egyszerűen tudjuk tartani a kapcsolatot, megosztani a releváns információkat és továbbgondolni az addig elhangzottakat.

Ha bármilyen kérdés merülne fel, örömmel állok elé akár itt emailen ([gal.kormendy@westpannon.hu](mailto:gal.kormendy@westpannon.hu)), akár telefonon (+36 30 221-8396).

Üdvözléttel,  
Körmendy Gál



Üdvözléssel / Mit freundlichen Grüßen / Best regards,

**KÖRMENDY Gál**

klaszter és gazdaságfejlesztési témavezető

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