

D.T4.2.2

Feedback reports on Co-Creation workshops

Project region



ERDF PP17 KSR Košice self-governing Region
ERDF PP7 Bioeconomy Cluster/ 2022

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1. General information about the co-creation workshop

Date of the workshop	23 rd March 2022
Topic of the workshop	How to support the functioning of Water Councils using the methodology of participative governance in the field of the Landscape Recovery Programme
Format of the workshop	physical
Region/Adress	Region Spiš, Café Dabar, Palešovo námestie 30, 053 04 Spišské Podhradie, Slovakia
Project partner(s) involved	Košice self-governing Region
Guiding question/theme of the workshop	How do foster trust in the participatory approach to decision-making in local government
Number of participants	11
Type of participants (Target groups) ¹ and name of institutions	<p>Local public authority: Municipality Offices: Spišské Vlachy Kolinovce Slovinky Margecany Žehra</p> <p>Regional public authority: Košice self-governing Region</p> <p>Interest groups including NGOs: Slovak Paradise National Park Forest Administration of the Slovak Republic</p>
Cooperation with experts (i.e. speakers, external moderators, politician...)	<p>Michal Kravčík – People and Water NGO, KSR parliament member</p> <p>Jaroslav Tešliar – Head of Agency for regional support Košice NGO.,</p> <p>Tünde Erényi - Regional Development Department Košice self-governing Region</p>

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

2. Objective of the workshop

The guiding objective of the second co-creation workshop organized by KSR was to find out how to support the functioning of Water Councils using the methodology of participative governance in the field of the Landscape Recovery Programme process implementation.

The concept of three co-creation workshops organized by the Košice Region was focused on supporting the initiative of the existing Water Councils initiative, which follows the strategic document of the Košice Region: Landscape Recovery Programme.

The Landscape Recovery Program reflects the regional need to address landscape damages in urban and rural areas here in Košice Region. Water Councils have the potential to tackle the regional challenges from the position of an advisory body to the regional authorities - therefore the concept of co-creation workshops focuses on their activities.

The co-creation workshop series was divided into three separate workshops with the same guiding objective, presented in different regions within the Košice Region.

The aim was to find out the current situation in the implementation of the Landscape Recovery Programme about its participative character.

The co-creation workshops were aimed at fulfilling the individual objectives – how to:

- support the functioning of Water Councils using the methodology of participative governance
- establish the Informal Platform of Water Councils as an advisory body to local government
- dive deep into the local and regional ecosystems and identify regional needs, particularly in rural areas, following the concept of the Landscape Recovery Programme
- how to support green and blue infrastructure, and water retention in the landscape of Košice Region in specific rural and urban areas
- how to identify the essential tools for the implementation of strategic objectives in the Košice Region?
- what are the legislative constraints on the implementation of actions aimed at the restoration of damaged landscapes?

Main goal of organized workshops was to strengthen local connections across stakeholders from municipalities, communities, farmers, foresters, environmentalists, and activists. To strengthen their cooperation and trust in the participatory process. The second step will be to seek linkages with regional and state authorities and strengthen their cooperation with each other in the case of the implementation of the Landscape Recovery Programme of the Košice Region.

The second step was to verify the level of participatory governance from the perspective of the Water councils of the Košice Region. Water councils by their nature meet the criteria of participatory governance and bring together participants in the interest of building and developing a cooperative decision-making tool for regional authorities, following the themes of the Landscape Recovery Programme.

3. Initial situation of your region

The initial situation was the alarming state of the urban and rural areas of Košice Region in terms of land degradation, land desiccation, soil infertility, and other socio-economic conditions.

In 2018, the Council of the Košice self-governing Region approved the Landscape Recovery Programme. Under the Restoration Plan, 6 Water Councils were established, based on participatory character, to implement measures for the restoration of damaged landscapes.

The Landscape Recovery Programme aims to change the approach to managing forest and agricultural landscapes as well as urban landscapes and to enable the development of water retention measures so that a substantial proportion of rainwater can be retained in the landscape. By implementing these measures, KSR, in cooperation with its partners, aims to contribute to restoring biodiversity processes, increasing soil fertility, increasing water supply, and improving the climate.

In February 2019, the Action Plan of the Landscape Recovery Programme of the Košice Region for 2019 was approved.

The aim of the Landscape Recovery Action Plan of the Košice Region is to create, activate and systematically prepare conditions for the comprehensive implementation of the Landscape Recovery Programme in the coming years. Thus, the goal of systematic and Integrated Landscape Restoration of the Košice Region through the executive body of the informal platform of Water Councils was defined.

The expected impact of the activities under the Action Plan was: Increased interest in landscape care by local government and urban and rural residents. Improved preparedness of residents to face the adverse impacts of climate change. Increased motivation of local governments to address issues from their municipalities with innovative revitalization measures.

The three co-creation workshops aimed to map the current status of the implemented activities and to increase the motivation of the members of the Water Councils to be more active in the region. The second objective was to identify the barriers that hinder the process of implementing measures for the recovery of damaged landscapes within the Košice Region. The third objective was to identify stakeholders to be involved in the process besides Water councils' initiative.

The pressure on the local government is huge, given the constantly deteriorating state of the landscape of the Košice Region - especially in rural areas, which are a source of food due to the significant agricultural nature of these areas.

The most important long-term goal of the organized co-creation workshops is to avoid dealing with the problems of damaged landscapes through a sector-oriented approach.

4. Methods used within the workshop

The training was conducted online using the methodology of the open space conference, focused on the topic of participatory governance methodology in the public administration system. The workshop was designed to bring to the fore the topic of participatory management, its basic definition, definition of terms, in order to ensure a smooth course

and understanding of the topic as a whole. The main aim of the workshop was to discuss possible solutions on how participatory governance could be used to improve the functioning of Water councils.

The method of the second co-creation workshop was discussion, which was expertly guided by environmentalists and regional development experts.

The second co-creation workshop took place in Spišské Podhradie, Spiš Region. The meeting was attended by members of water councils: mayors of towns and villages, forest managers, water managers, and local activists.

In the introductory part of the meeting, the strategy of the Landscape Recovery Programme was presented in comparison with the activities already implemented in Spiš Region.

The most important objective of the second workshop was to map how the participatory management process of the members of the water councils works in the territory of Spiš Region, one of the least developed regions of the Košice Region. Participants confronted the actual implementation of the activities versus the plan and identified the barriers that hinder the implementation of the participatory process.

The questions to ask:

- Why is active stakeholder participation necessary
- Who do you want to target? Which stakeholders are necessary to reach?
- How to foster trust in the participatory approach to decision-making in local government
- How are you going to deliver your message?

5. Lessons learned for next upcoming workshops

The experience with the first and second workshops brought with it the idea to organize a meeting bringing together all Water Council representatives. This meeting will allow them to confront their experiences. Participative governance would be upgraded by inviting representatives of local, regional, and national authorities to this meeting.

With this step, we wanted to support the positive effect of the co-creation workshops and thus ensure a greater influence of the main idea.

Mistrust and criticism can be eliminated by suggesting possible solutions that will help in the implementation of the measures. For example:

- ✓ Suggest that participants start meeting and sharing their experiences in practice.
- ✓ arrange for members of the water councils to meet with regional authorities
- ✓ encourage them to start institutionalizing their informal associations
- ✓ organize landscape recovery measures on land owned by towns and municipalities

In the next rounds of co-creation workshops, we have therefore decided to put as much emphasis as possible on reminding participants of the importance of solving problems in the region through a participative governance.

We noticed a positive effect among the workshop participants when it was suggested to them to meet with authorities that have an impact on legislation, which is very important in the case of the implementation of landscape restoration in urban and rural areas.

Participants were very positive about the opportunity to start tackling small things, within their remit. Not to wait for big changes, but to start addressing landscape restoration measures that may seem small but mean a lot. This would ensure that simple solutions inspire others.

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

The local administration, from which most of the seminar participants were drawn, expected the meetings an open discussion on the barriers that complicate the implementation of the Landscape Recovery Programme of the Košice Region: (legislation, centralization of the system, funding, etc.)

The participants of the second workshop expected new impulses that would strengthen their position in the decision-making process within the Košice Region - in the implementation of the Landscape Recovery Programme measures. This approach was involved in the organization of all three co-creation workshops.

The Košice self-governing Region, as the host of the meetings, is expected to map the results of the work of the Water Councils - an informal initiative based on the principle of participatory governance. It is in the interest of the Košice self-governing Region to solve the problems of the damaged landscape. To do this, it needs an executive body, the Water Councils, which best reflects the situation and needs of the regions.

Previous care of the landscape to solve problems sectorally-based brings serious risks in water protection (water scarcity, deterioration of, water quality, increasing flood frequency), environmental (loss of biodiversity), food (decline in production potential of soils), social (poverty, migration waves) and climate risks.

Professional capacity building is needed to turn around the sectoral approach to dealing with the restoration of damaged landscapes. KSR expected workshop participants to define the space for collaboration, identify partners necessary to engage in the process, and identify barriers to participatory management.

In the case of the three co-creation workshops that were organized within the 6 regions of the Košice Region, there was a need to organize 4th workshop to bring together all the members and stakeholders involved in the guiding objective of the Landscape Recovery Program in one place.

To support the main idea of professional capacity building, we invited representatives of government and decision-making bodies to the workshop.

After the three co-creation workshops, series of five small workshops were held in the regions that participated in the co-creation workshops (May 2022).

At these meetings, the planning of the agenda for the 4th workshop started. According to the ongoing discussions, a list of relevant stakeholders was selected.

7. Outcome of the co-creation workshops

At the second meeting, an initiative for regular meetings of the Water Councils in the Gemer region was agreed upon, together with the start of the process of institutionalization of the Water Councils in the region. An initiative was also launched to start implementing water conservation measures in the area with the assistance of the Agros. s.r.o. farm.

8. Innovation potential for your region

The Košice self-governing Region continues the implementation of the Landscape Recovery Programme, which focuses on the adoption of water conservation measures or a change in the approach to land management. On Thursday, 9 June, the Košice Region organized a 4th co-creation workshop - Forum on Landscape Recovery at the Congress Hotel Roca. Speakers were interesting guests from state and public administration, civil associations, and environmental activists.

The 4th workshop will present the outcomes as well as the actions that need to be taken to improve the environment. It will also benefit from insights into how the restoration of the damaged landscape of the Košice Region can contribute to a neutral carbon footprint.

We anticipate that, in parallel with the start of the program implementation, there will be a partnership with research, which will monitor the feasibility of the above quantification of the objectives with possible correction. By implementing of the Landscape Recovery Programme will also make a significant contribution to the employment of harder-to-employ citizens who are not finding employment in the current labor market. It can be expected that the creation of these new jobs will make it possible to employ more than 10 000 inhabitants of the Košice Region.

However, the first step towards the big targets was the organization of the 4th co-creation workshop with the active participation of the State Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Slovakia.

9. Strengths and weaknesses of the process of participative governance

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 regard to institutional capacity?

Strengths and benefits of the participatory process in the regions, identified during the 4 co-creation workshops:

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- ✓ Better and more effective communication between stakeholders (exchange of information, networking, elimination of tensions, and consensus building),
- ✓ a better formulation of actions based on the suggestions received from the participants
- ✓ increased mutual trust between stakeholders
- ✓ improving the potential for cooperation in the future

KSR did not identify problems with the involvement of different stakeholders in the process of finding a solution - they were open to it. In Slovakia, the participatory governance process is still a new experience for the municipalities thus there is a need to build trust in this governance process. Which we also see as a weakness of the participatory process in the intentions of the Košice self-governing Region.

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

Within the Landscape Recovery Programme, activities aimed at improving the functionality of participatory governance will be mainly concentrated in this area. Further steps will be focused on support the functioning of Water Councils using the methodology of participative governance.

As a representative of the regional authority, we are committed to engaging policymakers to further use participatory governance. Therefore, we have focused on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of this process in co-creation workshops. The main weakness was identified as the centralized approach in local governments, which hinders the use of participatory governance in the regions.

Next steps:

- ✓ Map the key stakeholders of the Landscape Recovery Programme, building new capacities in field of participative governance
- ✓ Strengthening the decision-making powers of territorial self-government
- ✓ Publication of the outcomes of the panel discussions
- ✓ Declaration of the co-creation workshop participants – Draft available online, ready for comments

11. Identified opportunities for rural development in your region

Opportunities to address demographic changes within the Košice Region (in the context of the Landscape Recovery Programme):

- ✓ Landscape Recovery as a key task for ensuring environmental, food, social and climate security, in any part of Slovakia
- ✓ development of local agriculture
- ✓ adaptation of water retention measures, retention of rainwater in the landscape, promotion of small-scale water cycle (This is one of the main reasons that agricultural

production is becoming more and more costly in terms of the need to maintain soil fertility)

- ✓ job opportunities in agriculture, which are in significant shortage, especially in the rural areas of the Košice Region
- ✓ The workshops brought about new collaborations between the different stakeholders

The 4th workshop organized by Košice self-governing Region aimed to create a space for an open discussion focused on the barriers that complicate the implementation of the Landscape Recovery Programme in the framework of the Košice Region: (legislation, centralization of the system, funding, etc.) The discussion took place between representatives of the regional authority and a representative of the state administration - the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic. Workshop was a great opportunity to present examples of good practice within the field of the Landscape Recovery Programme. The main objective of the organized workshop was to dive deep into the plans of the Water Councils of Košice Region within the Landscape Recovery Program 2021-2030 of individual regions included topics for comprehensive solutions for the WEF (water, energy, food) approach, like climate change effects on water supply; soil fertility; extreme heat and the occurrence of natural disasters.

Annexes

