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Feedback report on co-creation workshops

Czech Republic

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Content

1.	IMPLEMENTED CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS.....	4
1.1.	GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS.....	4
1.2.	OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP	7
1.3.	INITIAL SITUATION OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC.....	8
1.4.	OUTCOME OF THE CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS.....	9
1.5.	INNOVATION POTENTIAL FOR THE CZECH REPUBLIC	10
2.	ASSESSMENT OF THE PARTICIPATIVE GOVERNANCE PROCESS.....	12
2.1.	METHODS USED WITHIN THE WORKSHOPS.....	12
2.2.	LESSONS LEARNED FOR NEXT UPCOMING WORKSHOPS	13
2.3.	WHAT DID THE LOCAL OR/AND REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND THE CITIZENS EXPECT FROM THE PROCESS OF PARTICIPATIVE GOVERNANCE?	13
2.4.	STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PROCESS OF PARTICIPATIVE GOVERNANCE	13
2.5.	PLANS TO USE THE PROCESS OF PARTICIPATIVE GOVERNANCE ALSO IN FUTURE	15
2.6.	IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC.....	15
ANNEXES.....		16

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1. Implemented co-creation workshops

The NCA's approach to organizing the co-creation workshops was based on participatory governance with the aim of involving regional and national stakeholders in the bioeconomy development in the Czech Republic. Three co-creation workshops with the same mission were implemented at three different places, two of which – Ostrava (Moravian-Silesian Region) and Ceske Budejovice (South Bohemian Region) were aimed at the regional level considering the bioeconomy potential of the respective region. The third workshop took place in Prague and was focused on the national level with representatives from the bioeconomy-related ministries and their confrontation with the current bioeconomy initiatives in the country and the progress of bioeconomy on the EU level. The description of the co-creation workshops and the evaluation of their outcomes are given in the following chapters.

1.1. General information about the co-creation workshops

A - The first co-creation workshop in Ostrava

Date of the workshop	15 March 2022
Topic of the workshop	Development of local economies through the use of renewable biological resources
Format of the workshop	Physical
Region/Address	Moravian-Silesian Region, Ostrava, 28. října 3388
Project partner(s) involved	NCA, HCCZ
Guiding question/theme of the workshop	How the bioeconomy can contribute to the local development. How the bioeconomic potential of the region can be exploited.
Number of participants	25
Type of participants (Target groups) and name of institutions	Local public authority: MAS Pobeskydji, z.s. Regional public authority: Regional Office of Moravian-Silesian Region Sectoral agency: MSID, MSIC, Moravian-Silesian Energy Centre Interest groups including NGOs: Trianon, Albrecht Secondary School (Cesky Tesin), Diamo, CzechHemp cluster and Hemp houses Higher education and research: Technical University of Ostrava SME: Lanex and JRK Business support organisation: Regional Chamber of Commerce of the Moravian-Silesian Region

Cooperation with experts (i.e. speakers, external moderators, politician...)	External facilitator – Dana Divakova
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B - The second co-creation workshop in Ceske Budejovice

Date of the workshop	19 April 2022
Topic of the workshop	Development of local economies through the use of renewable biological resources
Format of the workshop	Physical
Region/Address	South Bohemian Region, Ceske Budejovice, Lipova 1789
Project partner(s) involved	NCA, HCCZ
Guiding question/theme of the workshop	How the bioeconomy can contribute to the local development. How the bioeconomic potential of the region can be exploited.
Number of participants	23
Type of participants (Target groups) and name of institutions	<p>Local public authority: Strmilov, Havlickuv Brod, Cizkrajice and Jarosov nad Nezarkou</p> <p>Regional public authority: Regional Office of the Vysocina Region</p> <p>Sectoral agency: CzechInvest</p> <p>Interest groups including NGOs: Hodslavice Farm</p> <p>Higher education and research: University of South Bohemia, South Bohemian Science and Technology Park</p> <p>SME: JRK, A-spectrum, Magnetrip and AB zemedelska and Adolf Kamen (freelancer)</p> <p>Business support organisation: Regional Agrarian Chamber of the South Bohemia Region, Czech BioGas Association</p>
Cooperation with experts (i.e. speakers, external moderators, politician...)	External facilitator – Dana Divakova

C – The third co-creation workshop in Prague

Date of the workshop	24 May 2022
Topic of the workshop	Sustainable development of the national economy through the use of renewable biological resources
Format of the workshop	Physical
Region/Address	Prague Region, Prague, Hybernaska 998
Project partner(s) involved	NCA, HCCZ
Guiding question/theme of the workshop	What is the potential of bioeconomy for a sustainable development. How to embed the bioeconomy in the government structure.
Number of participants	26
Type of participants (Target groups) ¹ and name of institutions	<p>Local public authority: Municipal action group of Trebonsko</p> <p>Regional public authority: Liberec Regional Authority</p> <p>National public authority: Ministry for Industry and Trade, Ministry of Regional Development; Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports</p> <p>Sectoral agency: CzechInvest</p> <p>Interest groups including NGOs: BioeastHub, Technology Centre CAS, Czech Technological Platform for Biofuels, Ikor, Cenia, Bioeconomy Platform of CR, CELEBIO (project)</p> <p>Higher education and research: Czech Academy of Agriculture Science (Research Institute for Fodder Crops, Ltd. Troubsko), Centre for Environmental Issues, Charles University in Prague, CEITEC, Institute for Democracy and Economic Analysis (IDEA)</p> <p>Enterprise, excluding SME: Nafigate</p>
Cooperation with experts (i.e. speakers, external moderators, politician...)	External facilitator – Dana Divakova

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

1.2. Objective of the workshop

The bioeconomy is practically unknown concept for the general public as well as for government bodies and public administration in the Czech Republic. The only Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic develops its sectoral bioeconomy on a strategic level and internationally by the participation in the BIOEAST initiative. The co-creation workshops were therefore conceived in two dimensions - on the one hand as awareness building for a better understanding of the bioeconomy sector and, on the other hand, to transfer this knowledge into local practice via participative governance and find the use of the bioeconomy for innovative projects in the region.

The EU concept of the *“circular bioeconomy that turns renewable biological resources and waste streams into new products and helps to slash the carbon emissions while also maintaining economic growth”* was introduced and its practical applications (project ideas, best practices etc.) in favour of local/rural development were facilitated during the work in groups.

The workshops introduced the perspective and potential of bioeconomy for rural areas and rural-urban cooperation, however, the public sector does not have sufficient knowledge and systemic/legislative impulses to transfer the information into practice yet. Therefore, the workshops served more for inspirational purposes by common developing project ideas that could be implemented in the given region as models of the biobased solutions.

The first part of the workshops structure introduced the GoDanuBio project and its activities. The participative governance was a subject of a special presentation of “The importance of participative governance for a joint and healthy development”, and similarly the presentation on “Bioeconomy and renewable biological resources” was given to unify the understanding of this cross-cutting, horizontal field.

The second - presentation part called “The potential of bioeconomy for local/national development” included the existing leading bioeconomy-devoted activities, successes and opportunities, such as biowaste treatment, use of multi-purpose biological resources (hemp) in industry or the cultivation of industrial crops on post-mining lands as feedstock for bioeconomy.

The last - practical part of the regional workshops enabled the simulation of the pilot bioeconomy projects where the participants could choose one of three bioeconomic topics for a work in groups: Biowaste, Production and utilisation of the renewable biological resources, and Bioenergy. At the national level, the programme of the workshop in Prague included panel discussion with panellists from the relevant ministries and institutions.

The high commitment of the organisers, the content and graphic concept of the invitation which attracted the attention of the target groups and the relevance of the addressed target group helped to engage a sufficient number of representatives of local/regional and national administration in the workshops.

1.3. Initial situation of the Czech Republic

As mentioned above, the Czech Republic and its government system has not embedded bioeconomy in the competence of any relevant body so far, which is actually the starting situation of Czechia. Thus, the pressure for change did not come from the participating stakeholders but from the organiser – the NCA as the GoDanuBio project partner, from representatives of bioeconomy initiatives and partners of other European bioeconomy-focused projects present at the workshops. The co-creation workshops made it possible to open up the topic of bioeconomy and develop potential projects in the form of a simulation within the chosen thematic group during the regional workshop's practical part – work in groups and during the panel discussion of the national workshop.

The Moravian-Silesian Region is a typical post-coal mining area with a POHO2030 strategic programme managed by the Moravian-Silesian Investment and Development (MSID) agency that funds the projects on the revitalisation of the post-mining landscapes. The use of these lands for cultivation and processing of industrial crops could help to avoid conflict with the use of agricultural land needed for cultivation of food crops. The regional funding of the POHO2030 can include also other bioeconomy approaches, such as phytoremediation of industrially polluted soils using bioeconomy multi-purpose crops, which include also hemp. At the same time local rope producer could consume regional raw materials instead of imports etc.

The South Bohemian Region is focused on agriculture and aquaculture. Fish farming in ponds plays an important role. Furthermore, the region has a developed biogas infrastructure and know-how in this field. The South Bohemian University in Ceske Budejovice has a lead in organizing summer bioeconomy courses for students. The region is also the first in the republic where the South Bohemian Association for Bioeconomy was established within the POWER4BIO project and where bioeconomy was included among the domains of smart specialization. Thus, the South Bohemian Region is the most advanced in the bioeconomy of all the regions of the Czech Republic.

The initial situation in the bioeconomy at the national level can be described as spontaneous and haphazard, so far only with actors from bottom-up initiatives, interested individuals and partners in international bioeconomy projects.

The discussed topics how to use the bioeconomic solutions in practice via participative governance can lead to more intensive exploitation of the post-industrial lands in the Moravian-Silesian Region, new and alternative renewable biological resources production in South Bohemian Region and a new approach to bioeconomy on the national level through the Government Council for Sustainable Development as agreed at the workshop in Prague.

1.4. Outcome of the co-creation workshops

As each of the three implemented co-creation workshops took place in different regional/national settings and with different bioeconomy topics and various composition of stakeholders, the following table shows only the most important outcomes - one per each workshop:

Outcome:	Name:	Stakeholder involved:	Expected duration:	Field of action (bioeconomy in general/ rural development/ urban rural cooperation)
Initiative (Prague)	Establishment of the Bioeconomy Committee at the Government Council for Sustainable Development	NCA, panellists (representatives of ministries), speakers (bioeconomy initiatives) and participants – public institutions, business and research entities, universities	NCA submitted the request to the Minister of Environment on 14 June 2022. The process can be completed in 2023.	Filling the gap in bioeconomy governance in the Czech Republic.
Project	---	---	---	---
Project idea 1 (Ostrava)	The use of the post-mining lands for cultivation of industrial crops, namely hemp, as the feedstock for biobased sectors.	NCA, CzechHemp cluster, regional development and innovation agencies, municipalities, business companies, social enterprises, university	year 2023 and beyond	Promotion of bioeconomy solutions in favour of the revitalisation of post-industrial rural areas and development of hemp industry.
Project idea 2 (Ceske Budejovice)	Regional concept of strengthening the role of biogas for reducing dependence on natural gas.	NCA, Czech Biogas Association, regional development and innovation agencies, municipalities, enterprises, university	year 2023 and beyond	Response to the energy crisis and building self-sufficiency in the area of biogas production from local sources of biomass and biowaste.
Network	---	---	---	---
Other (please specify)	---	---	---	---

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Among the other outputs from the regional co-creation workshops, the following topics appeared as project ideas worth mentioning:

Ostrava

- Feasibility study on the establishment of a regional research and education centre for the comprehensive use of hemp involving the participative governance approach.
- The advantages of the gasification technology of local biomass over the classical incineration of the biodegradable municipal waste.

Ceske Budejovice

- New and alternative renewable biological resources - breeding and refining of insects in the concept of bioeconomy.
- The exploitation of pond mud for fertilization of agricultural land.

Prague

The national co-creation workshop in Prague enabled the search for solutions how to embed the bioeconomy in government structures. It was based on the confrontation of the representatives of the ministries with the existing bioeconomy bottom-up initiatives and the bioeconomy development support in the EU countries. As a result, a joint request to the Government Council for Sustainable Development (GCSD) to establish a new Bioeconomy Committee was prepared by NCA. The letter and the document „Proposed procedure for the coordinated development of the bioeconomy in the Czech Republic” were submitted to the Minister of Environment, the chair of the state advisory body of the GCSD, by NCA on 14 June 2022. The NCA was then asked, through the Platform for Bioeconomy of the Czech Republic, to prepare lectures on bioeconomy for meetings of the existing GCSD committees, where the proposal of the NCA will be discussed.

In general, the co-creation workshops were well received, the participants were satisfied and thankful for receiving absolutely new information for them concerning the bioeconomy and its perspective for local/rural development. However, it is not possible, so far, to assess whether there will be an increase in the institutional capacity of municipalities in this field.

1.5. Innovation potential for the Czech Republic

The implemented co-creation workshops represent the first targeted campaign about the bioeconomy in the environment of public administration and other representatives of participatory governance in the Czech Republic. The bioeconomy as such has long-term support from the European Commission within funding programmes at the level of research, cooperation, transfer of experience and best practice, etc. On the contrary, the bioeconomy is not a part of the Czech government agendas, it is not explicitly mentioned in the thematic calls of the existing funding programmes in the Czech Republic, and it is not promoted to professionals and general public. Therefore, there is a huge innovation potential for this field in the Czech Republic, which has not yet been sufficiently revealed.

The implemented co-creation workshops and the following regional dialogues were very important forerunners for the necessary changes, especially in the area of the government policy and general awareness with the possibility of wide use of renewable biological resources instead of the fossil ones, especially for benefits in the field of environmental protection and rural development.

The EC's recent focus on the resilience of value chains as a result of the war and energy crisis brings further arguments for a systemic development of bioeconomy and greater concentration of funding agencies on the financing of innovative projects in the bioeconomy sector in the Czech Republic. The GoDanuBio project and its activities, such as the co-creation workshops, helped to pave the way towards these goals.

2. Assessment of the participative governance process

In the co-creation workshops, the NCA focused on two levels of participatory governance, namely regional and national. Stakeholders were invited to correspond to the participatory governance system, i.e. public administration, businesses and citizens. Since the knowledge of the bioeconomy is minimal in the regions, the connecting of these participants from different spheres of the governance could bring inspiration for new projects. Among these, the cultivation of hemp on post-mining lands could be welcome by local producer of ropes. Also, the identification of weaknesses took place. The DIAMO state enterprise, a company charged with closing mines and removing the consequences of mining activity, does not use the agricultural reclamation of lands for their revitalisation. This may be one of opportunities for the regional stakeholders and the funding agencies to set up a project on phytoremediation of non-agricultural lands by means of industrial crops cultivation and the subsequent capitalisation of the biomass in various industrial sectors including bioenergy.

In general, the participative governance is on a high level in the Czech Republic and this basis will be further used in the process of bioeconomisation of the regions, started in the GoDanuBio project.

2.1. Methods used within the workshops

The method of guided discussion through facilitators was the main and most productive method used in the co-creation workshops. A structure of workshop was prepared with regard to the specifics of each region and the composition of participants.

The main objective of the workshops was to propose projects that would be feasible in the Czech Republic in cooperation with all relevant entities (municipalities, cities, ministries, entrepreneurs, citizens, universities, etc.) focused on the use of renewable biological resources.

Especially the third part of the two regional workshops, after the introductory session (introduction of the project, participatory processes, introduction to bioeconomy) and the presentation part (delivering the local activities in the field), the participants were divided into three groups. Each group had its own facilitator, flipchart for writing down important notes and a professional in the field who presented the given topic and explained the given issue. Further, the schedule of this practical part was drawn up and used in all three workshops. It included the introduction of facilitators, experts and topics (1 - Biowaste, 2 - Production and use of renewable biological resources and 3 - Bioenergy). Subsequently, the facilitators proceeded according to the common outline in the simulation of preparation of bioeconomic pilot projects. At the end of the co-creation discussion within the individual group, the outputs were presented to all participants. At the end, there was a joint discussion about the benefits of this workshop and each participant was asked to express his/her opinion. The outputs and suggestions were recorded by the organisers.

This method enabled each participant to learn, to ask and provide his/her opinion or share new knowledge. Participants from different parts of the governance system could see the proposed projects from different points of view and thus even contribute to its improvements.

2.2. Lessons learned for next upcoming workshops

The organizers held a meeting after each workshop where they evaluated the progress and results of the workshop and proposed possible improvements for the next workshop.

The outputs of the previous workshop were also presented during the next workshop. Special attention was paid to publicity and the selection of participants to address.

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

Both the citizens and people from municipalities expected mainly the clarification of the concept of bioeconomy and they also appreciated the possibility to share good practices both from abroad and the Czech Republic, and implemented both in public and private sector. An important synergy came from the Moravian-Silesian Innovation Centre (MSIC) which is the Czech partner in the Interreg Europe project of CECI (Citizen Involvement in Circular Economy Implementation) showing also the examples of circular bioeconomy-based enterprises, such as Coflab of Belgium producing oyster mushrooms cultivated on the organic waste of the coffee grits.

Another example on regional restructuring from mining to bioeconomy was delivered by the GoDanuBio lead partner. It concerns the Rhenish Region of Germany, called “Bioeconomy REVIER”, the area of which has been shaped by lignite mining and agriculture. Against the background of structural change, an entire region now aims to transform from an economy based on lignite to a more sustainable economy, the bioeconomy. This message was also very important for the Moravia-Silesian Region.

The participative governance was introduced to the participants as a tool for the inclusion of citizens and professionals to the public projects and development new directions, such as bioeconomy. However, this principle of participative governance has been broadly used throughout the public authorities of the Czech Republic.

According to the feedback, the expectations of the participants were met.

2.4. Strengths and weaknesses of the process of participative governance

Strengths

- Implementation of Local Agenda 21 in the Czech Republic
- Existence of the Healthy Cities of the Czech Republic (HCCZ) and its cooperation as the associated partner in the GoDanuBio project

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- Participatory processes in municipalities
- Implementation of projects under the participative governance in municipalities
- Existence of the bioeconomy research potential of the University of South Bohemia
- Existence of pilot projects in public sector (bioenergy, municipal biogas stations, etc.)
- Existence of "passionate" individuals at various levels

Weaknesses

- Lack of information on bioeconomy
- Lack of resources (not all biowaste is suitable for further processing, there is no support for the cultivation of technical hemp, the composting on housing estates is not solved, etc.)
- Insufficient support from the state (technical and financial support, promoting the idea of bio-waste recovery)
- No bioeconomy thematic calls within the funding programmes
- Low bioeconomy awareness among citizens
- Low bioeconomy awareness among municipalities

Problems with the involvement

Municipalities

Low interest of municipalities in the topic of bioeconomy because of their low capacity for implementation of innovative solutions, lack of raw material for the operation of biogas plants (cancellation of large-capacity cowsheds), no subsidies for construction of biogas plants, high purchase price (up to 50 million CZK), payback up to 20 years.

Greater interest in community energy, but also only among a small percentage of municipalities. One of those active municipalities, there is the municipality of Tranovice, whose project manager took part in the co-creation workshop in Ostrava and subsequently invited the NCA to take part in their meeting to establish the local association for community energy.

Regions

Regions are faced with the reality of ending landfilling, as are the municipalities. However, it is the regions that could provide incentives for the development of the bioeconomy in their Waste Management Plans.

There was little interest in the workshops from individual regional authorities, although each (except Prague) had a representative from the region, especially from the Environment Department.

Other partners (entrepreneurs, universities, etc.)

There was no problem with the involvement of this target group, however, influencing the change of the system, the support of the bioeconomy, is on the side of the state and these entities can only give recommendations.

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2.5. Plans to use the process of participative governance also in future

The participation tool is quite widespread in the Czech Republic thanks to the implementation of Local Agenda 21 (121 municipalities, cities, micro-regions, counties). The Healthy Cities national network brings together 139 members, out of which about 70% are also Local Agenda 21 implementers. Generally, the public administration institutions are dedicated to participation and sustainable development of settlements.

The themes of public participation may include:

- Revitalisation of public spaces with regard to climate change
- Revitalisation of housing estates
- Activation of household biowaste collection not only in family houses as an outcome from the project
- Anchoring the bioeconomy in the government's advisory body (Government Council for Sustainable Development)
- Informing about the bioeconomy at meetings between regions and municipalities
- Supporting the implementation of pilot projects
- Involving the public in decision-making processes
- Participative budgets
- Public hearings on topics implemented in cities (e.g. parking, courtyards, playgrounds, parks, etc.)

The support for participative processes in cities and municipalities varies. In some towns and cities, the participative processes have already become an integral part of citizens' lives, while in others it is very difficult to ensure targeted and continuous communication from the authority to the public.

Now, when the municipal elections are over in the Czech Republic, there is an opportunity to give more support to participative processes for the new/existing municipal leadership.

2.6. Identified opportunities for rural development in the Czech Republic

The demographic change is a topic of extreme importance for small municipalities and villages in rural and remote areas. The bioeconomy solutions using the locally available biomass could help to retain young people in place provided adequate incentives are available, such as the municipal and individual housing supports.

The rural development opportunities include the development of community energy systems, availability of biowaste and biomass and/or development of rural enterprise zones.

Concerning the rural-urban cooperation, it is not possible to define, in general terms, how to establish and promote it as the workshops took place in different regions with different regional, demographic and economic conditions. There was no specific example of such opportunity within the co-creation workshops.

The Moravian-Silesian region is (apart from Prague) the most populous region with the highest population density. Therefore, there is a simpler situation of communication and cooperation when the individual towns (municipalities with extended powers) are in close proximity to smaller municipalities. The Moravian-Silesian region is still more of an industrial than an agricultural area and the opportunities for bioeconomy must be seriously assessed.

The situation is different in the South Bohemia Region which is primarily agricultural and fish farming and therefore has better conditions for the development of the bioeconomy.

The situation is completely different in the capital city Prague where cooperation with other municipalities is not even possible.

Individual regions can support the development of the bioeconomy in their conceptual documents, especially in the area of the waste management but they are subordinate to the Regional Waste Management Plan that must be also in accordance with the National Waste Management Plan. The change must therefore primarily occur at the national level.

The implemented workshops helped to empower rural areas in the regions, however only at the very initial level through the information learned and ideas discussed. Those participants interested in more profound information about bioeconomy were invited to contact us. Also, the interconnection with other participants was the benefit of the workshops. Sharing good (and also bad) practices is very important for the development of a given region. Regular meetings of representatives of municipalities on the bioeconomy topics, transfer of information and sharing of good practices are the future tools for the bioeconomy governance in the Czech Republic. Therefore, the NCA promotes the proposal that the Czech government should establish the government position of a “plenipotentiary for bioeconomy”, who would develop this sector in a holistic way, i.e. with positive effects on rural development and demographic changes.

Annexes

Agenda of the co-creation workshops, invitations for the workshops

Pictures from the workshops (1 picture from each workshop)

Press releases of the workshops (2 press releases in czech language)