

D.T4.2.2

Feedback reports on Co-Creation workshops

Bulgaria



BRAIT
BSMEPA
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Project Information

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1. General information about the co-creation workshop

Date of the workshop	12/05/22
Topic of the workshop	Co-creation activities to diminish the effects of demographic change
Format of the workshop	Online
Region/Adress	Bulgaria
Project partner(s) involved	BRAIT, BSMEPA
Guiding question/theme of the workshop	The demographic crisis in the Danube region in Bulgaria
Number of participants	15
Type of participants (Target groups) ¹ and name of institutions	Local public authority, Regional public authority, Interest groups including NGOs, SMEs, Enterprise, General public
Cooperation with experts (i.e. speakers, external moderators, politician...)	External moderator

2. Objective of the workshop

The objective of the co-creation workshop was to implement activities aiming to tackle the current issues in the Bulgarian region concerning the deep demographic crisis through the tools of circular bioeconomy. The intended output was to develop project ideas through which the current situation can be improved. The event's focus was on rural-urban cooperation, and how the local circular bioeconomy can be strengthened. To achieve this, both local and regional public authority representatives were involved, in addition to SMEs, NGOs and the general public. Representatives of educational institutions were also involved.

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

3. Initial situation of your region

Bulgaria is one of many regions being transformed by huge demographic shifts. Bulgaria's population was around 9 million at the end of the 1980s, but it fell to fewer than 7 million in 2018, and is expected to fall below 6 million in 50 years. The UN Population Division projects that Bulgaria will lose 23% of its population by 2050.

Only in the capital, Sofia, the population has increased. Decreases were registered in all other parts of the country, with a dramatic 26 percent drop in the Danubian northwestern provinces of Vidin and Montana, and the northeastern province of Dobrich.

For this reason, the topic of demographic change was chosen, in order to brainstorm activities which could help diminish this issue.

4. Methods used within the workshop

The methods used were: presentation of case studies, a moderated discussion and World Café.

The idea of using case studies from other similar regions was used as an inspiration for participants so that they could come up with their own project ideas.

Secondly, a moderated discussion followed, which involved all the participants in the workshop, under the guidance of the moderator.

Lastly, the participants were split into groups and given the task of identifying solutions to the previously discussed issues.

We would recommend using this structure in order to facilitate a fruitful discussion and active participation among all attendees.

5. Lessons learned for next upcoming workshops

The methods used for a moderated discussion and World Café were extremely helpful in implementing a dynamic and engaging environment for sharing ideas.

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

The local administration related to us that they were expecting dynamic discussions and an active dialogue between them and the citizens. The general public was also hoping for the chance to share their ideas with representatives of the local and regional government. We firmly believe this aim was fulfilled, as both parties were able to take active part in the workshop.

7. Outcome of the co-creation workshops

Outcome:	Name:	Stakeholder involved:	Expected duration:	Field of action (bioeconomy in general /rural development/urban rural cooperation)
Project idea	Danube Water	Local and regional government, NGOs, citizens	3 years	Rural development

The project idea is dedicated to agricultural wastewater and the launch of a combined technology for its treatment and reuse.

The practical problem the team is working on is, in fact, water scarcity, which is hampering economic prospects in many rural areas.

The reuse of wastewater and nutrients is necessary, and there are no adapted technologies for effective control over the supply of nutrients and thus for the use of water and fertilizers.

The aim is to demonstrate innovative and competitive technology for the reuse of wastewater in agriculture and for water treatment and irrigation in one system - a development tailored to the requirements of farmers.

The expected result from the start of the project is a complete applicable and marketable system for reuse of wastewater.

The next step is for the participants to seek financing from European funds.

8. Innovation potential for your region

Despite the efforts made in recent years by the Bulgarian government to improve the legislative framework and to promote innovation and eco-innovation, Bulgaria still lags behind in these areas.

The administrative procedures for launching patents are still slow and clumsy. The legislation in the field could be further improved to encourage more investment in the sector. Economic,

financial, administrative and socio-cultural barriers slow the advancement of eco-innovation in the country.

Important barriers include limited investment and funding opportunities, high energy prices and inefficient energy infrastructure. Nonetheless, several significant drivers were also identified; the most significant were: a rise in awareness from business, citizens and government on the benefits of green products and technologies, high skilled human resource and knowledge capital and Bulgaria's leading regional position in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector.

Despite the growing demand for environmentally-friendly products and services, stakeholders remain reluctant to invest in these areas. To meet the objectives of promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy sources, waste management and green transport, local stakeholders are taking advantage of funding options set up by the National, European funded Programmes and initiatives.

9. Strengths and weaknesses of the process of participative governance

The workshop definitely strengthened the capabilities of the local and regional administration in terms of knowledge on participative governance and urban-rural cooperation. The only weakness identified in the process was the willingness of the general public to participate and find the added value in such activities. Bulgaria doesn't have a great track record in participative governance and the concept is still relatively new.

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

We plan to involve the general public in the following workshops, which will be dedicated to different issues. We hope this format and methods will motivate also the policy makers to use participative governance and to be willing to take into account the ideas generated by the general public.

11. Identified opportunities for rural development in your region

The participants identified the opportunity for reusing waste water in the agricultural regions of Bulgaria. This project idea could revitalize the agricultural potential of the region and in this way, attract the younger population to settle or resettle in the region.

12. Annexes

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

Pictures of the workshop

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