



Bringing Organisations & Network Development  
to higher levels in the Farming sector in Europe  
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## BOND PROJECT

# New Solutions for Collective Action

R E T H I N K I N G

REGENERATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS

*The case of Hungary and Croatia*

THE FUTURE OF EUROPE'S **FOODS & LANDSCAPES**





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**RETHINKING REGENERATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS**

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and Croatia*



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## Executive Summary

In order to tackle the mounting environmental, social and economic challenges that humanity faces due to the impacts of climate change and other crises, agroecological and other sustainable good practices are needed to be put forward and out- and upscaled. To achieve this, empowering agriculture-focused organization in the form of collective action - *organized form of act carried about by a group of people* - may present a working alternative. This publication showcases a number of different forms of collective action in Hungary and Croatia with the aim to provide a better understanding of their specific contexts, operations, challenges and opportunities supported by the activities carried out within the frame of the BOND project (Bringing Organisations and Network Development to higher levels in the Farming Sector in Europe). The report points out that networking, sharing of experiences, capacity building trainings and education tailored to the needs of agricultural actors using participatory methods with a multi-stakeholder and interdisciplinary approach are essential to accelerate the transition to a more sustainable, equitable and environmentally-conscious agri-food system in these countries. Finally, the report also helps decision-makers in both countries by providing policy recommendations formulated by farmers and other related actors (researchers, members of civil society organisations, etc.) - addressing for instance regenerative agricultural practices, green public procurement and social economy - as means to promote the widespread usage of sustainable practices, measures and to create the enabling environment for the transition and to regenerate our food systems.



# 1 Introduction



## Introduction

The vast majority of the global population is aware of the numerous challenges we are facing in the food production and consumption: climate change, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, depopulating rural areas, ageing and decrease in farmers' community, unhealthy diets leading to various health problems. It is obvious that our current globalized food system model is broken<sup>1</sup> and is unable to tackle these problems. However, around the globe many agroecological initiatives are emerging, showing good examples of how to overcome these challenges while respecting the environment, assuring fair incomes and working conditions and providing not only healthy and nutritious food, but a diverse and resilient environment. In order to scale out and up these practices, collective action is needed. **Collective action** is any form of organized social or political act carried about by a group of people in order to address their needs.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, attitudes towards collective action vary greatly throughout the world – and in Europe – for various reasons. The different activities of the BOND project (Bringing Organisations and Network Development to higher levels in the Farming Sector in Europe) were designed to strengthen and promote collective action in selected countries. In this publication, we focus on Hungary and Croatia, **to gain a better understanding of existing challenges and opportunities of collective action in these two countries. Moreover, three key areas and a series of recommendations are presented that could greatly influence the transition towards a more sustainable and resilient food system: regenerative agriculture (production side), green public procurement (consumption side) and social and solidary economy (alternative economic framework).** These concepts are crucial if we want to regenerate our current food system: fundamental changes are needed, and these approaches offer an alternative solution on both the production and the consumption side.

First, the report describes the past and current context of collective action in Hungary and Croatia to offer a clearer picture of the current situation. Both countries share the same communist past, gained their independence and became members of the European Union in 2004 (Hungary) and 2013 (Croatia). Therefore, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) greatly influences their national policy. As the CAP is currently undergoing a reform for the next period (2021-2027), we believe it is important to include a brief insight of the CAP and its new objectives. Second, the report presents a short overview of the BOND project and its theoretical background, followed by a more detailed explanation of each activity carried out in the two countries, and a discussion of the impact of these BOND activities on the participants and their organizations in the two countries. Last, but not least, the report offers recommendations and suggestions that arose during the project's events in order to inspire farmers, land managers, policy makers and other stakeholders to strengthen collective action at different levels with a view to making a transition towards a regenerative food system that is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable.

1) Eggersdorfer M, Kraemer K, Cordaro JB, Fanzo J, Gibney M, Kennedy E, Labrique A, Steffen J: Good Nutrition: Perspectives for the 21st Century. Basel: Karger, 2016, pp 132–144 (DOI:10.1159/000452381)

2) Mark Aspinwall, Justin Greenwood Collective Action in the European Union: Interests and the New Politics of Associability, New York: Psychology Press, 1998.



## 2 Collective action and context in Hungary and Croatia

## Collective action and context in Hungary and Croatia

### 2.1. Hungary

In Hungary, the history of collective action taken by a wide range of agricultural actors dates back to the end of the 19th century. In 1898, the first network of producer-consumer (marketing) cooperatives, the so-called '*Hangya Szövetkezet*'<sup>3</sup> (meaning 'Ant Cooperative' in Hungarian) was funded through the support of the then ruling government. The network was quite extensive and well-organized as it operated market halls in many small-medium settlements in the Carpathian basin.

Hangya can be regarded as the predecessor of today's short-supply chains as it aimed to shorten down the route of products and services that directly arrived to the consumers maintaining the flow of cash within the system, therefore contributing to the creation of adequate and dignified conditions for rural livelihoods. **In 1940, the Hangya network had over 700.000 members, 2000 cooperative members, 30 can factories, 20 industrial plants, and over 400 shops making it one of the biggest corporate group in Europe regarding its membership and diverse commercial activity.**<sup>4</sup> However, it is important to point out that a huge state funding mechanism enabled *Hangya* to rapidly develop into an extensive network from 1920. When the communist regime took over in 1945, *Hangya* basically ceased to exist. The regime confiscated the commodities and financial settings of *Hangya* without any remuneration or compensation. All shops, plants, market halls were taken away and incorporated into the so-called *ÁFÉSZ* (state farmer, consumer and marketing cooperatives) through the **forced collectivization** of land and other properties. As opposed to *Hangya*, *ÁFÉSZ* strongly limited the democratic rights of the members and farmers became detached from their land as the ownership belonged to the state.

Nowadays, forced land collectivization still takes its toll on the attitude and perspective of farmers about cooperatives. Even the word 'cooperative' has a negative connotation that contributes to the present low cooperation tendency, activity and mistrust among Hungarian farmers, producers and other actors of the food system. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990, state farmer cooperatives were dismantled and privatized. Lands were sold at biddings for compensation bonds or money or were redistributed among former employees of state farms and members of production cooperatives.

In 1992, a new model of cooperatives was legislated (then amended in 2006) which ended the rule and absolutism of state ownership which then shifted towards private ownership (similar to Western models). **The new model was not subsidized or funded by the government; it worked on a volunteer basis that resulted in a very small number of cooperatives** after the regime change while the number of large private farms and very small family farms created a new land and ownership structure in the country.

Hangya was brought back to life in 1998 under the name of the Association of Producers and Sales Cooperatives funded by 14 cooperatives building on the rules and practices of Western European cooperatives such as open membership, voting rights, democratic opinions or non-profit sharing. The website of Hangya refers to 400 cooperatives as members comprising of crop production, grape and wine production, beef production, elderberry production, milk sale cooperatives. The current membership represents only 20% of the total number of Hangya member cooperatives that existed before 1945, thus reinforcing reduced farmer uptake in cooperatives. While the centrality of Hangya has waned, other bottom-up organizations have sprung up and aligned their activity to the current challenges of farming and farmer cooperatives.

In addition to *Hangya*, *MOSZ*<sup>5</sup> (National Association of Hungarian Agricultural Cooperatives and Producers) is another nationwide representative body of producer cooperatives which also operated during the so-

3) Hangya Szövetkezet/Ant Cooperative" Last modified 10 April, 2020, <http://Hangyaszov.hu/>

4) Hangya Szövetkezet/Ant Cooperative" Last modified 10 April, 2020, <http://Hangyaszov.hu>

5) National Association of Hungarian Agricultural Cooperatives and Producers", Last modified 10 April 2020

cialist regime starting in 1967, but in 1989 it underwent reform in order to better fit the circumstances of the privatization. After Hungary's EU Accession in 2004, due to EU tenders and funds favouring the creation of agri-cooperatives and so-called producer groups, the *Hangya* network and other producer cooperatives were incentivized to obtain funds for the development of their activity and better organization. Due to this financial support, at present, 194 producer groups are operating in the country ranging from crop to animal production.

### New Forms of Collective Action

However, it is worth noting the emergence in the recent years of several other bottom-up initiatives for collective action in Hungary:

- The '**KÖKISZ**'<sup>6</sup> (Association of Community-Supported Small Farms) is an informal advocacy network of community supported agriculture farms funded in 2014.
- The '**SZÖVET**'<sup>7</sup> (Living Tisza Alliance) aims to support the livelihood of farmers and producers living in the catchment areas of Tisza river while preserving its ecological value.
- The **Nyíregyházi Kosár Közösség**<sup>8</sup> (Shopping Community of Nyíregyháza) is a non-governmental initiative working to strengthen and even to revitalize the local economy by linking local producers to consumers. Since their establishment in 2013, they have inspired many similar initiatives and carried out training to replicate this model.
- The **Polyán Association**<sup>9</sup> started a local economy development program in 2008, which aims to create a complex, local producer-consumer system based on local resources and sustainable production by saving an old resilient Hungarian cattle breed.
- The '**farmers-millers-bakers' cooperation network**, regroups actors who are committed to promoting healthy, nutritious and artisanal baked goods by strengthening cooperation among the stakeholders.
- **The Network of Orchardists of the Carpathian Basin**<sup>10</sup> is a cross-border collective from Hungary, Transylvania (part of Romania), the former Upper Hungary (part of Slovakia) and the Vojvodina (part of Serbia). Their goal is to save fruit landraces of the Carpathian Basin in situ or on farm and to spread the 'adaptive orchard management' approach and its diverse activities among the members and newcomers.
- **Magház (Seedhouse)**<sup>11</sup> is a nationwide seed-saving network to educate and motivate others to grow and preserve open pollinated heirloom plant varieties instead of buying seeds from the shop. They do this through spreading the tradition of seed exchanges in the country. From the very beginning, Magház has been a combination of friendship and people of the same interests: members come together to save seeds with an agroecological objective, so they are already interested in related issues. Magház has no geographical center; rather they try to establish local hubs in Hungary each working with their own collections. However, securing funds and the fluctuation of volunteers presents challenges to the work of the organization.
- **The Elite - Honey Beekeepers Cooperative**<sup>12</sup> was set up in 2018 and is the only organization that joins Hungarian beekeepers for sustainable honey production and for the creation of a single market for organic honey. The cooperative is also a research network consisting of 56 beekeepers, operating a nationwide on-farm network that tries to find solutions with organic acids against the varroa mite.
- **The Hungarian Association of Independent Winegrowers (Vindependent)**<sup>13</sup>, (another strong producer association in Hungary beside the beekeepers is the winegrowers) was established in 2005 and aims primarily to advocate for the interests of small and medium-sized winegrowers in liaising and consulting with trade organizations and authorities in Hungary and the European Union. The Association also provides a forum for the discussion of related economic and legislative issues as well as issues of European and national policies with a view to finding a common ground and driving advocacy accordingly.

6) "Association of Community-Supported Small Farms", Last modified 10 April 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/portfolio/alliance-of-small-scale-community-farms/>

7) "Living Tisza Alliance", Last modified 10 April 2020 <http://www.elotisza.hu/>

8) "Shopping Community of Nyíregyháza", Last modified 10 April 2020 <https://www.nyiregyhazikosar.hu/>

9) "Polyán Association", Last modified 10 April, 2020 <https://www.polyan.hu/>

10) "The Network of Orchardists of the Carpathian Basin " Last modified 10 April, 2020 <http://gyumolcsez.hu/content/r%C3%B3lunk>

11) "Seedhouse", Last modified 10 April, 2020 <https://maghaz.hu/>

12) "Elite - Honey Beekeepers Cooperative", Last modified 10 April, 2020 <https://elitehoney.eu/en/startpage/>

13) "Hungarian Association of Independent Winegrowers", Last modified 10 April, 2020 <http://vindependent.hu/hirek/>

- **Solidarity Economy Centre**<sup>14</sup> (Budapest) is a young organization that facilitates solidarity economy as a means to create social power for just transition, which it promotes as a democratic, regenerative alternative to the increasingly violent, exploitative answers to the economic and ecological crisis. Since 2018, the Center has created and coordinated a nation-wide network of solidarity economy enterprises, and does research, expert advice, and network building to promote and scale local solidarity economy models.
- The main objective of the **Social Farm Alliance** is to initiate talks and actions about new agricultural models with positive social functions that can be applied in a healthy and innovative way. They work from the assumption that rural farms are much better embedded in the micro-community through their social, health, employment and educational links, opening up additional opportunities for farmers.

It is also worth mentioning that inspired by the BOND activities, in 2019, Végegylet initiated the process of forming an **Agroecology Network in Hungary**, comprising of stakeholders (farmers, researchers, members of civil society organizations, decision-makers, etc.) that have many years of track record in the field of agroecology - many of the above-mentioned organizations are also part of the network – with the aim of boosting and upscaling agroecological activities and relevant research in Hungary.

All of these bottom-up initiatives have been founded by people sharing similar values and a passion for common goals in response to the various challenges that our society is facing: loss of biodiversity and natural habitats, air, soil and water pollution, malnutrition and obesity, inequality, rural development. Most of them include members working on a voluntary basis with no governmental funding to create locally adapted social innovations to address national and global problems. In order to address the funding issues, recently, the EU released its funding program for the creation of ‘innovative operational groups’ supporting the productivity and environmental efficiency of agricultural actors with a special emphasis on climate adaptation. The program may help the technological and knowledge-based innovation potential of Hungarian agricultural interest groups such as cooperatives, although there are no functioning operational groups as of now in Hungary.

To sum up, **aptitude for collective action existed before 1945 and was severely damaged during the socialist regime due to forced collectivization through state farmer cooperatives**. The farmer generation brought up in the era of state-owned cooperatives is reluctant to forge alliances for collective action even today due to the bad experiences that the word conveys to them. This is the reason why only a small portion of producer cooperatives exists in Hungary today compared to the situation before 1945. However, **the new generation of farmers** - often educated in Western European countries - **understands cooperatives as democratic representation of farmers and producers’ interests** after the Western examples. Therefore, young Hungarian farmers are more prone to cooperation. Their motivation is partly supported through EU and state funds as well in the Young Farmers Program, or the creation of producer groups and innovative operational groups.

## 2.2. Croatia

In Croatia, the history of collective action in agriculture began in the 19th century, with the **first cooperative founded in 1864** on the island of Korčula with the main purpose of helping farmers to overcome the economic crisis at the time.<sup>15</sup> In the beginning, all of the cooperatives were established out of necessity and they were not government founded, unlike those in Hungary. Since they were not politically established or influenced by any parties, they had highly motivated members whose membership stake was high. Those first cooperatives were based on principles of democratic management and responsibility, volunteering and high ethical standards.

The biggest problem for farmers was the availability of funds. To meet their needs, the **Croatian farmers bank was established in 1902**. Most of the credit for the establishment of that bank goes to Antun Bauer,

14) "Szolidáris Gazdaság Központ", Last modified 10 April, 2020 <https://szolidarisgazdasagkozpont.hu>

15) Ana Katic, "Zadruagarstvo U Hrvatskoj, Izazovi I Prilike", 2016, Last modified 12 May, 2020 <https://repositorij.unipu.hr/islandora/object/unipu%3A2799/data-stream/PDF/view>

the man who collected all the capital for the bank, motivated by the desire to protect the interests of Croatian farmers. The bank's purpose was to provide credit to farmers' cooperatives. Cooperatives quickly then began to work with the bank, which led to the strengthening of a growing number of farmers' cooperatives. In the region of Dalmatia, **cooperatives grew rapidly between 1894 and 1918**. Given the increase in activity by cooperatives, specialized cooperatives for processing the purchase and sale of the products started to occur. Examples are oil processing cooperatives in Povolja, wine producing cooperatives in Bol and fishermen cooperatives in Opuzen.

**After 1945**, when the communist regime took over, the situation with the cooperatives also changed. **Cooperatives moved from private to state ownership**. "Farmers working cooperatives" were established with the purpose of joint land usage. The downside was that farmers were forced to transfer parts of their land, machinery, buildings and cattle to the cooperatives. This produced resistance and negative experiences towards cooperation.<sup>16</sup> Later on, the government established cooperatives called "*kombinati*" which became drivers for agricultural development. They were very well organized and had all the necessary infrastructure. However, bitterness due to land confiscation persisted.

After the domestic war and the establishment of the Republic of Croatia **in 1991**, the new Constitution brought changes in the legislation, property relations, concept and development of economics and, also, a different context for agriculture and cooperatives. **The New Cooperatives law was adopted and defined cooperatives as private, voluntary associations, respectable economic entities which form the infrastructural economic network across the country and bring together most of the farmers**. In 1992, The Cooperative Union of Croatia changed its name to the 'Croatian Agricultural Cooperative Alliance' which constantly cooperates with all relevant institutional bodies in Croatia, thus promoting the ideas and practices of the original European cooperative that had existed on Croatian ground over 100 years before.

In the 2000s, even though there was a greater number of cooperatives in Croatia, their business activity was significantly reduced, according to the survey by the Croatian Agricultural Cooperative Alliance. Many cooperatives went bankrupt and just a small portion of their assets remained in the ownership of the newly formed cooperatives. This collapse caused reduction in the production of the farmers' cooperatives. **After 2010**, the idea of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) began to gain traction in Croatia.

The **first CSAs were formed in the bigger cities** of Croatia, such as Zagreb, Rijeka, Pula. CSAs are locally oriented citizens' associations which support local farmers where organic certificate is not necessary. This organic certification became common with the development of Solidary Ecological Groups (SEG) that started in 2013. These are associations of producers with organic certification that also sell directly to consumers and have an extensive network throughout the country. The network of Solidary Groups was established in 2014. Both **CSAs and SEGs are excellent examples of collective action driven by the need for reliable sources of healthy food for consumers and reliable market for producers**.<sup>17</sup>

By raising awareness of better ways to produce and distribute healthy foods, a new generation of farmers, mostly the ones who choose farming as their vocation, is starting to overcome the bad legacy of the previous regimes. They are learning and starting to open up to cooperation based on trust, responsibility and democracy. The biggest existing problem among farmers' associations is narrow specialization and lack of cooperation between association; for example, beef producers' associations fight only for their needs, beekeeper associations for theirs. More productive communication with the government and other relevant stakeholder groups would be a desired joint initiative.

16) Tatjana Borbaš, Marina Mikšić, "Poljoprivredne - Marketinške Zadruge", 2003. Last modified 12 May, 2020 [https://www.savjetodavna.hr/wp-content/uploads/publikacije/poljoprivredne\\_marketinske\\_zadruga\\_-\\_slozeno.pdf](https://www.savjetodavna.hr/wp-content/uploads/publikacije/poljoprivredne_marketinske_zadruga_-_slozeno.pdf)

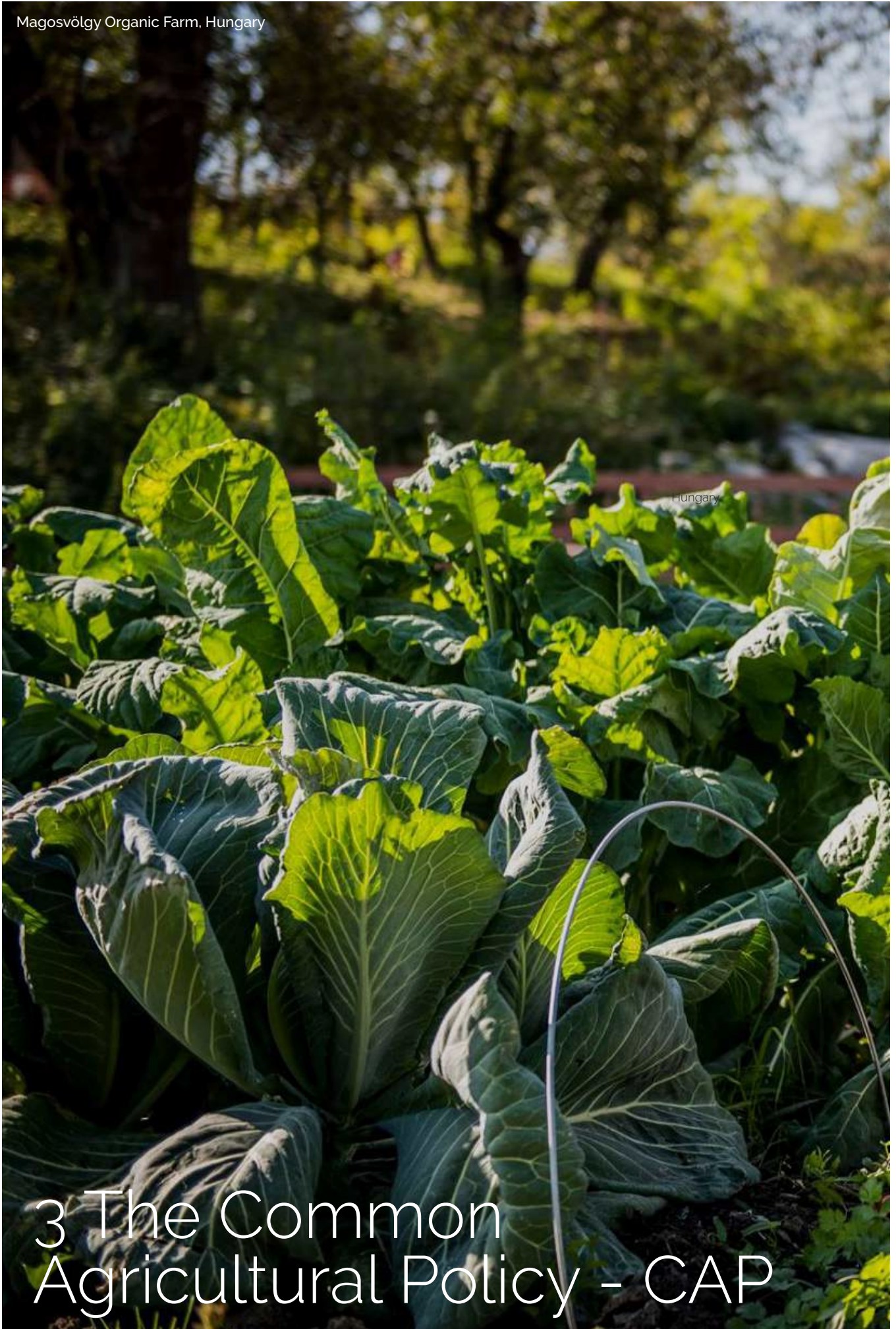
17) "BAZA Znanja", Last modified 12 May, 2020 <http://www.ekocrepeu.grupe-solidarne-razmjene-u-republici-hrvatskoj/>

In conclusion, **both countries share similar historical tendencies in the formation of the first national farmers' cooperatives in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and the rapid spread of these forms of collective action during the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. One manifest difference between these collectives lies in their specialized activities due to territorial characteristics.** Croatian cooperatives were formed mainly around farming activities typical to the Mediterranean region, like fishing or oil processing whereas Hungarian cooperatives were formed largely around traditional arable production or animal husbandry. Yet, these countries share the same historical heritage of the soviet forced collectivization that occurred between 1945 and 1990. The change of regime after 1990 brought about the privatization of farms, which was a sign of liberation from state ownership. However, **the fifty-year long regime had created mistrust in farmers with regard to cooperation with other farmers. Now, the new generation of farmers seeking innovation and connections lead the change in the attitude toward collective action in the form of several bottom-up organizations built on the cooperation between farmers in both countries.**

Magosvölgy Organic Farm, Hungary

Hungary

# 3 The Common Agricultural Policy - CAP





## The Common Agricultural Policy - CAP

As both countries are members of the European Union (EU), their national agricultural policy and, therefore the incentives, are very much influenced by the EU's common agricultural policy (CAP), which is a common policy for all EU countries, managed and funded at European level from the resources of the EU's budget. It was launched in 1962 as a partnership between agriculture and society, and between Europe and its farmers. It has undergone several changes since its introduction, from reducing its cost (from 73% of the EU budget in 1985 to 37% in 2017) to reconsidering its original aims, like granting much more importance, and therefore more funding to rural development (Agenda 2000). The CAP's current aims are:

- to support farmers and improve agricultural productivity, ensuring a stable supply of affordable food;
- to safeguard European Union farmers to make a reasonable living;
- to help tackle climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources;
- to maintain rural areas and landscapes across the EU;
- to keep the rural economy alive by promoting jobs in farming, agri-foods industries and associated sectors.

The CAP has been criticized by different stakeholders on grounds of its cost, and its environmental and humanitarian impacts.

### 3.1. The new CAP after 2020<sup>18</sup> and the Biodiversity<sup>19</sup> and Farm to Fork<sup>20</sup> strategies

On 1 June 2018, the European Commission presented the legislative proposals on the future of the CAP from 2020 onwards. Based on nine objectives, the future CAP will continue to ensure access to high-quality food and strong support for the unique European farming model.



The 9 CAP Objectives of the European Commission

The nine objectives of the future CAP are:

- to ensure a fair income to farmers;
- to increase competitiveness;
- to rebalance the power in the food chain;
- to enhance climate change action;
- to strengthen environmental care;
- to preserve landscapes and biodiversity;
- to support generational renewal;
- to generate vibrant rural areas;
- to protect food and health quality

18) European Commission, "Future of the common agricultural policy", Last modified, 28 May, 2020 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/future-cap_en)

19) European Commission, "EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030", Last modified, 28 May, 2020 [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index\\_en.htm](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index_en.htm)

20) European Commission, "From Farm to Fork", Last modified, 28 May, 2020 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/farm-fork\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/farm-fork_en)

*“The coronavirus crisis has shown how vulnerable we all are, and how important it is to restore the balance between human activity and nature. At the heart of the European Green Deal the Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategies point to a new and better balance of nature, food systems and biodiversity; to protect our people’s health and well-being, and at the same time to increase the EU’s competitiveness and resilience. These strategies are a crucial part of the great transition we are embarking upon.” (Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission)*

The above-mentioned strategies act both on the production as well as the consumption side, including the reduction of the use of pesticides, fertilizers and antibiotics, the increase of organic farming and the protected areas on land and at sea, tackling food-waste, informing consumers and making healthy and nutritious food more accessible to all. These strategies also talk about ‘transformative change’, where “a new, strengthened governance framework is needed to ensure better implementation and track progress, improving knowledge, financing and investments and better respecting nature in public and business decision-making”.<sup>21</sup> **Farmers and land managers play a key role in the environmental and economic sustainability of the farming sector in Europe. The way they organize and network, and their ability to combine individual and collective work, both mutually reinforcing, critically influence the future of Europe’s foods and landscapes. Their involvement in decision-making on topics related to biodiversity and farming is crucial for a transformative change.** The BOND project came into being with this objective at heart.

21) EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 - [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index_en.htm)





4 BOND project  
background

## BOND project background

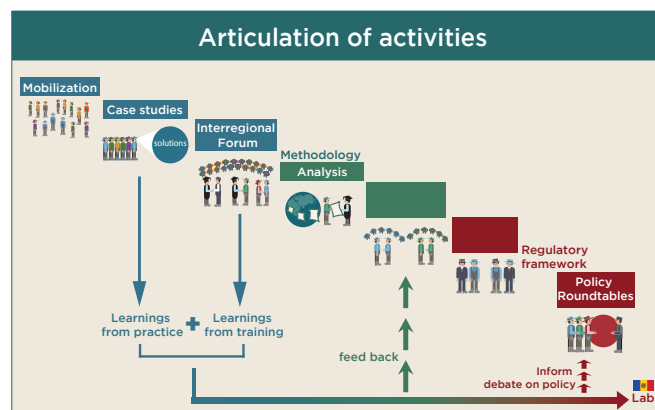
### 4.1. BOND project overview<sup>22</sup>

BOND is a project that started in 2018 and ended in 2020, and gathered 17 partners from 12 European countries, receiving funds from the EU Horizon 2020 Research & Innovation program.

The aim of this project is to reach higher levels of organization and networking, and develop a healthier, and more productive and harmonious farming sector in Europe for the long term.

Within this perspective, BOND's general objective is to directly contribute to unleash, strengthen, and organize, the great potential for collective action and networking of individuals, groups and entities of farmers and land managers in selected countries across Europe, with a view to creating strong, dynamic and effective organizations that have a voice and a place in policy design. Through the benefits of working with others, extending interactions with multiple actors, the project helped to foster human well-being, the management of landscapes, agricultural growth and a vigorous social capital throughout Europe.

The project is structured into three big pillars: **'SEE'**, **'LEARN'** and **'TELL'**.



BOND Project Flow of Activities

The **SEE** pillar consists of learning from success: it all started with a wide mobilization taking place all across Europe, where 60 representatives were chosen to take part in 6 study tours. To celebrate the diversity of farmers in Europe and to exchange their realities and possible new ways of collaboration, these representatives met at an Interregional Forum in September 2018. These activities set the scene for the following steps of the project, connecting people together and bringing on board different constituencies and key actors, in a range of formal and informal encounters and sharing, developing relationships, exchanges and skills.

The **LEARN** pillar was designed to overcome constraints to collective action, and to that end, a methodology for self-analysis was developed and used to identify hot-topics that would become the central themes for the National Workshops where participants could dive deeper in the given topics.

The **TELL** pillar's aim is to affirm a position in the policy landscape by the creation of a gaming interface used on different occasions, but also to collect best practices in regulation throughout Europe and apply all learnings in a Lab Experiment in Moldova. An important set of activities of this pillar was the four Regional Policy Roundtables organized around vital topics to the farming sector (access to seeds, land and markets).

22) For more details about the project, its partners, actors and all of its activities as referred to in this report, please see the BOND project website: "Bringing Organisations & Network Development (BOND) to higher levels in the farming sector in Europe", 2019, <https://www.bondproject.eu/>.

Training sessions were held throughout the project in order to enable farmers and land managers to engage and benefit from the synergies of working with others. This user-friendly menu à la carte of practical processes, with methods and tools<sup>23</sup> are available to everyone who wishes to embark on such an adventure.

## 4.2. The project's conceptual theory of **BONDING, BRIDGING, and LINKING**

The term 'social capital' refers to people's ability to work together in groups. Francis Fukuyama defines the concept more broadly and includes "any instance in which people cooperate for common ends on the basis of shared norms and values".<sup>24</sup> Social capital is an asset and allows individuals to group together, defend their interests and organize to support their collective needs; therefore, it is a crucial ingredient



Átalakuló Közösségek (Transition Network).

in organizational development. The creation of social capital requires the development of three different types of relationships:

### 4.2.1. Bonding relations

*Bonding among farmers within an organization at the grassroots level (intragroup relations)*

Bonding social capital refers to ties within an organization (intra-group relations) among members with high levels of similarity in attitudes, information and resources. These relationships are close between a small group of people. In the case of farmer organizations or groups, a bonding relationship is generally formed between farmers of the same social group with common characteristics. They share a sense of

23) BOND project". Last modified 21 May, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/tools-developed/>

24) Francis Fukuyama "Social Capital and Development: The Coming Agenda" SAIS Review, Volume 22, Number 1 (2002): 23-37; Project MUSE

common identity and belonging, based on a same social history and territory. Efficient and sustainable bonding ties, within an organization, are structured around: (1) a common goal and voluntary membership, and (2) a shared identity in a limited group size.

For example, in KÖKISZ (Hungary), the members are all smallholders devoted to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Most of them share the same challenges such as building the farm to be economically feasible and environmentally sustainable; at the same time, marketing and the promotion of their activities present huge hurdles to them. Knowing that almost all smallholders of CSA have similar issues, reinforces their bond and prompts them to find solutions together – for example in the form of financial trainings and workshops. In the Njam-njam association from Croatia, members are farmers who believe in the same vision of regenerative farming and relationships. They share a mutual market and logistics for the distribution of products, as well as mutual challenges in establishing functional farms from scratch, so that they can support each other in finding solutions.

However, bonding relations can be inward looking and protective in nature and can translate into defensive strategies while producing exclusion. Often, local organizations are based on traditional village bonds or on status, such as gender and age; these bonds are too limited to the group they belong to and so they can also resist change. Thus, opening is necessary to turn them into more socially and economically inclusive organizations through building bridging relations for them to become more outward looking.

This resistance to openness is reflected, for instance, in some cases where more traditional types of associations may have created closed communities around their production. To illustrate, Biokultúra Association, the oldest organization for organic producers in Hungary, did an excellent and unique job by creating the only representative body of organic farmers in the country. But nowadays, the members of Biokultúra are mostly composed of elderly organic farmers who created a very closed community who are quite reluctant towards education and the innovative spirit of young farmers. Therefore, the membership of the Association is stagnating and resisting new organic innovations. This is an example of the kind of resistance the BOND project sought to overcome by supporting vigorous bonding relations and empowering organizations to share and project externally through networks, cooperation, alliances, as we can see in the next section.

#### 4.2.2. Bridging relations

*Bridging between farmer organizations to form apex organizations or networks (intergroup relations);*

Bridging social capital refers to connections between various organizations which are similar (inter-group relations). Bridging relations are horizontal ties that unite farmer organizations together to create larger organizations in the form of producer unions, federations or networks. In unions and federations, member organizations share part of their decision-making power; in loose networks, each organization keeps its full autonomy. The main benefit of bridging social capital is to achieve a critical size to compete effectively on markets at national and global level or so-called additive alliances (for instance, it enables to pool new assets, competencies and resources).

Also, cooperatives can create and develop a range of specialized partnerships to provide new assets and specific competencies to their members or so-called Complementary Alliances<sup>25</sup>: for instance, building a new competitive advantage through a partnership with local NGOs to access trainings, research and extension services. In the same vein, Solidary Ecological Groups associations from Croatia joined their forces in improving logistics throughout the country so that they can distribute their products where needed. They are separate associations with specific local environments but, nationally, their network is becoming

25) Maryline Filippi, Pierre Triboulet "Strategic Alliances and Types of Control in Agricultural Cooperatives" Revue d'économie industrielle Volume 133, Issue 1 (2011): 57-78.

very efficient enabling them to reach EU funds which then further enables them to grow and spread.

The development of bridging relations (inter-organizational relations) connecting similar organizations together to form larger organizations is a relevant development for organizations that aim to an effective inclusion in value chains at national and global levels. Through bridging relations, they can achieve both competitiveness and members' participation. The currently forming Hungarian Agroecology Network is a very good example of this. The network is composed of different bottom-up, individual organizations that are dealing with agroecology but represent different stakeholder groups and sectoral approaches. For instance, Védegylet as a green eco-political organization works as an agroecological social movement, the Permaculture Association and Hungarian Research Institute of Organic Agriculture work in the field of natural science research and agroecological practice while the Environmental Social Sciences Research Group strengthens the social sciences side. All members have their distinctive focus and activities within agroecology but, inspired by the BOND project, they decided to join forces for out- and upscaling and promoting agroecology in Hungary.

#### 4.2.3. Linking relations

*Linking among farmer organizations and public, private business and service providers, as well as policymakers (extra-group relations)*

Linking social capital relates to relationships between groups in different social strata, different positions of power, social status and wealth. Linking relations are vertical ties that can be created with influential actors belonging to the economic or political arena such as private businesses, governments, research institutions, funding agencies (extra-group relations). The linking form of social capital has potential to work as leverage; it helps an organization to advance further. It can improve the terms for groups to take part in the economy by improving its ability to participate in trade relationships and access to new opportunities.

For example, the founders of Magház have very good relationships with two organizations that can help the network's political and funding opportunities. Magház officially collaborates with the National Biodiversity and Gene Conservation Centre which is a background institute of the Hungarian Ministry of Agriculture. Therefore, this collaboration has a huge potential to boost the lobbying power of Magház in the political arena to form relevant policies and obtain funds for their activities. The Ecological association Vojakovac, in Croatia, began a close collaboration with the Faculty of Agriculture in the University of Zagreb, as well as with other farmers' organizations [baby beef association, LAG (Local activation groups that are established by government)] in research of the impact of regenerative agriculture. Results of this collaboration have a strong impact on recognizing regenerative agriculture as an important model to incorporate into the agricultural picture of Croatia.

By building linking social capital through their cooperatives, associations or groups, farmers can benefit from market opportunities. But their effectiveness depends on the ability of the farmer organizations to establish, manage and pursue balanced relations with powerful actors such as governments (negotiation power) and economic actors (market power). Through strong links with economic actors, farmers can gain access to national and international markets. Linking relations with policymakers help actors create the enabling environment and conditions for their organizations to thrive and develop sustainably. In order to address these relations, the BOND project used social capital theory in defining its three pillars: from presenting well working examples of collaboration with governments and economic actors to trainings in developing social capital, and last but not least to engaging participants in negotiating with different stakeholders on topics relevant to them.

It is important to have an appropriate balance between all types of social capital, not just bonding with an absence of the other types. Often the development of one relationship depends on one or both of the



other two; however, their evolution path is not linear or automatic. It happens through a conscious process whereby farmers become the primary drivers of their development. The BOND project helped to nurture reflection and action on bonding, bridging and linking relations and the next section highlights the regional flow of the activities.



# 5 Flow of BOND activities

## Flow of bond activities

As mentioned before, in order to reach higher levels of organisation and networking, and develop a healthier, and more productive and harmonious farming sector in Europe for the long term, the BOND project provides tools, learnings, methods and networks to reinforce collective action and to build collaborative bridges amongst the 34 countries in Europe. These are built upon three pillars: SEE, LEARN and TELL. Here, we present in more detail these activities with a special focus on their regional flow in Hungary and Croatia.

### 5.1. SEE

#### 5.1.1. Study Tours<sup>26</sup>



Norwegian Study tour, BOND Project

BOND organized 6 study tours and visits to key selected sites in 6 countries (Netherlands, Norway, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK), for face to face encounters and common sharing and exploration of practices between those who have successfully reached higher levels of aggregation and governance, having acquired a stronger position in negotiation and policy design, and those who are in the process of engaging in more collective practices. These could be individuals, groups, cooperatives and other entities in countries where the level of organization is considered low. These immersions and interactions benefited a total of 60 representatives of farmers and land managers groups and entities, including group leaders, facilitators, intermediaries. These were then able to bring back home to their own countries, the knowledge and experiences acquired during the trips. The study tours also contributed to developing closer ties between the different stakeholders and the creation of interregional networks, using social media platforms. Altogether 5 representatives from Croatia and 5 from Hungary participated in 5 different study tours.

During the **study tour in France**, 14 participants visited several multi-stakeholder farmer cooperatives. Three major central themes connected these organization: (1) providing local, healthy food at a reasonable price, (2) developing, alongside sustainable farming practices, social linkages between rural and

26) "BOND Study tours", Last modified 21 May, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/project-activities/study-tours/>

urban areas and (3) boosting rural employment. For instance, *Le Gerموir*<sup>27</sup> is basically a farm-size incubator that fosters the setting up of organic farms by offering life-size experimentation periods for farmers. They help young farmers and new entrants into agriculture to learn organic practices, and to develop their practical experience at a small scale. Another site, *Le panier vert*<sup>28</sup>, is a cooperative for processing and directly selling food in a local farmer's shop. It is locally oriented, very vocal about local farmers' interests and maintains an open, democratic and gender-balanced organizational system. For the participants, the tour was extremely useful to see and experience that a cooperative can function not solely for economic reasons and profit maximization but that social and regional benefits can determine its activity.

CUMA Nord'Oignon<sup>29</sup> is a farm machinery service cooperative where the investment is shared in all the equipment required for the sorting, grading, drying and packaging of onions. 30 farmers are members of the CUMA, including 10 organic producers. Since onion is a speculative crop, it was quite difficult to gather people together for this collective project, it took 10 years to find the right way to operate, but today more and more farmers request to join. The sale of the onions is the task of another linked cooperative, Marché de Phalempin, which is a cooperative dedicated to the sale of fresh vegetables from 188 producers. It has an agreement with the CUMA Nord'Oignon to sell all the onions of the CUMA members, and to provide market feedback to the producers.

*“In my opinion, the future of small producers lies in working together and acting together in the market and currently the cooperative is the best possible way... Perhaps in financial terms, independence is more promising in a cooperative, it has a greater force as a unit and also an advantage in terms of access to assets. It greatly facilitates the journey from crop to product by making the processing accessible to all members, so it does not require an individual investment that would only serve its own profit-oriented purpose.” (Árpád Tóth)*

*“The best part of the study was the chance to talk directly with the people operating and leading successful examples of cooperations. The variety of cooperations was wonderful and I could catch useful information for our region from each one of them. Since I had the opportunity to talk and learn directly from the people running cooperative systems, I could ask specific questions on topics with which we had issues and I got a lot of useful answers. This was a starting point for my personal growth which then reflected in our organisation.” (Nikolina Pokupec)*

In **the Netherlands** 3 farmers' initiatives were visited by the participants, and their commonalities can be found in the emphasis on territorial approach, local and transparent leadership and farmers' pride. For instance, the Water, Land and Dikes Association deals with not only agricultural production but they also pay attention to environmental, nature and landscape management. Therefore, their cooperative is focused on much more than just food production, it is oriented toward protection of natural values, support of local communities or helping the transition of local agriculture toward economic as well as social issues.

The Northern Friesian Woodlands Association with more than 1000 members has also a very similar profile. They have high involvement in agriculture landscape and nature management with region specific practices. They maintain good relationship not only with farmers and the civil sector but also with the government; they are contributors of national environmental and agricultural policies by providing new, alternative practices to Dutch farming. The Waddengould is a bit different from the other organizations as it is not a production cooperative, but a certification body of the regional products of Wadden. Besides certification, they provide complex services for branding, marketing, product development and distribution, plus education of locals and tourists about nature protection.

27) "Le Gerموir", Last modified 9 April, 2020 <https://terredeliens.org/le-gerموir-111.html>

28) "Le Panier Vert" Last modified 9 April, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BOND-REPOSITORY-FR-A-Panier-Vert-v3.pdf>

29) "Nord'Oignon" Last modified 9 April, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BOND-REPOSITORY-FR-Cuma-Nord'Oignon-v3.pdf>

*“I was really fascinated by the ‘front door-back door’ process of Dutch organizations, the essence of which is: at the front door, the authority concludes a contract with the regional organization, setting agri-environmental objectives; at the back door, the regional organization agrees with each land user. Basically, all parties are benefiting from the situation: the government - reducing implementation costs (including control) and outstanding contracts; land users - the administrative procedures are taken over from them by the cooperative so they have more time for farming; they receive support and advice through the organization on their opportunities to achieve agri-environmental objectives, and closer cooperation is established between them regionally; regional organizations can better achieve agri-environmental objectives”. (Lili Balogh)*

Four farmers’ cooperatives were visited in **Norway**, having one of the same central themes as in the Dutch and French case: multi-functional agriculture, meaning that these cooperatives focused on social and environmental issues surrounding agriculture, not just production and economic interests. The rest of the central themes differ depending on the involvement in the whole value-chain and long-term planning, ownership of data and transparent and democratic function. For example, the TINE dairy cooperative is one of the oldest farmer organizations in the country, established in 1881. What is unique about the organization is that it is owned by the member farmers, more than 10 000 members. Therefore, they are not only users but owners which keep them involved and committed in the long run. They control 95% of the country’s milk production. They have organized milk collection from dairy farms all around the country; they process milk to dairy products, market and distribute products and provide advisory services for members. Another unique organization is Inn Pa Tunet, which deals only with social issues of farming and agriculture; they provide green care on farms for a wide range of user groups such as youth with problems, farmers with mental illness or drug abuse. They also provide a mentoring system, training and competence services to the different user groups.

*“Building trust and cooperation between farmers would be one of the pillars on what rural development should be based on. This pillar is mostly missing in Hungary. However, before founding TINE, in Norway, the milk sector was full of distrust and a killing competition caused damages to the producers. The government realized that and pressed farmers to cooperate and helped cooperation. This example could be used in Hungary too, though farmers oppose such solutions, because of the memories of forced cooperative in the communist era. Probably younger farmers could cooperate easier.” (Péter Kajner)*

In **Italy** six farmers’ cooperatives were visited, all of which connected by the following central themes: transparency and maintaining the ethics of the cooperative, greater recognition in national and international policies, and the development of small markets controlled by the farmers. A great example is CANOPI, the Italian National Consortium of Beekeepers, which is the biggest Italian cooperative of honey producers maintaining high ethical and quality standards. They can maintain their high purchase price through innovation and new product development, also paying attention to building trust with consumers. The Covered Market of Montevarchi is basically a farmers’ market where several local, territorial producers market their product directly, selling exclusively sustainably produced goods. For them, a multi-stakeholder approach involves not just consumers but also good relationships with the local government through which they can build connection among farmers, and farmers and decision-makers as well.

*“Montevarchi is a unique collaboration between decision makers, producers and the public that is entirely based on short supply chains – something that I have not seen in my country. The relationship between producers and consumers is close, with a strong emphasis on the transfer of information. Producers do not pay rent but contribute 10-15% of their income to maintain the market, which ensures sustainability in the long run.” (Ágnes Major)*

31) Ecological Land Cooperative”, last modified 10 April, 2020 <https://ecologicaland.coop/>

32) “Bristol City Food Network” Last modified 10 April, 2020 <https://www.bristolfoodnetwork.org/>

33) “Pasture-Fed Livestock Association” Last modified 10 April, 2020 <https://www.pastureforlife.org/>

In the UK, 6 organizations were visited by the participants. For instance, the Ecological Land Cooperative's<sup>31</sup> mission is to provide affordable opportunities for organic farming businesses in England and Wales. They help to revitalize the countryside by creating places where agriculture, forestry and other rural businesses that are viable and ecologically beneficial can be dealt with under affordable conditions. However, acquiring that land has conditions such as different financial construction (rent to buy), agricultural attachment, business plan and monitoring and ongoing support in obtaining design permits and doing business. The landowners and farmers also face several challenges like lack of infrastructure (water, roads, electricity). But due to the activities of small farmers, the natural condition has significantly improved; biodiversity is returning to the land. Another example is the Bristol City Food Network<sup>32</sup> which supports, connects individuals, community projects, organizations and businesses with a shared vision to make Bristol a city of sustainable food. The network has a major impact on the community. It drew attention to the importance of reviving our food supply system and made many people aware that food should be a local affair. The Healthy Schools Programme displays food in all parts of the curriculum, in collaboration with the Soil Association, the BBC and the 'Incredible Edible'. The work in schools reaches all cultural backgrounds, all parts of the city. Another unique example is The Pasture-Fed Livestock Association<sup>33</sup> that promotes the special quality of meat products from exclusively grazed livestock and the additional environmental benefits of these. They have developed and been operating a quality-guaranteeing system while carrying out promotional campaigns to promote beef and lamb from grazed herds. They also actively organize online discussion forums and regional groups that help farmers by providing opportunities for experience exchange and cooperation.

*"I have received many answers to my questions that I had before the tour, but none of them can be moved to the Hungarian case just by "cutting and pasting". More importantly, however, I was reinforced in the reason why we have to continue farming, we are not alone: others see the value of what we work for, a new world is being born that is worth doing where it is still better to live." (Dorottya Harazin)*

### 5.1.2. Interregional Forum<sup>34</sup>

The interregional forum brought together the 60 beneficiaries of the study tours, the project partners, associate partners from the study tours and other stakeholders (farmers' and land managers' groups and researchers). The forum was organized in Córdoba, Spain between 24-25<sup>th</sup> September 2018 with the aim to take stock of the study tours (results and experiences were presented and discussed), to share good practices and involve participants in an action planning exercise (to be applied locally, in their own countries). It was also an excellent occasion to exchange, become inspired by others, network and establish connections for future collaborations.

*"It was a wonderful location, it was great to have all European countries represented, and especially giving the voice to Eastern European countries which is usually not the case." (Lili Balogh)*

## 5.2. LEARN

### 5.2.1. The Training of Trainers (ToT) in Córdoba, Coventry and Kishantos<sup>35</sup>

A set of training activities were carried out by FAO throughout the project implementation aiming to provide tools and concepts to the selected participants so that they could facilitate in their organizations and in their respective countries trainings or awareness-raising sessions on the selected topics: emotional intelligence, principles and values, elaboration of a common vision to strengthen organizational performance and equity, communication, advocacy and negotiation.

The **first 4-day training of trainers**, carried out after the Interregional Forum, was on emotional intelligence, governance, equity and performance of farmer organizations to allow participants to reflect on the importance of values and principles for effective farmer organizations, to provide a framework and a tool to understand and analyse organizational performance, to understand the process to build a common

<sup>34</sup> "BOND Interregional Forum" Last modified, 11 April, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/project-activities/interregional-forum-and-tot/>

<sup>35</sup> "BOND Training of Trainers" Last modified, 11 April, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/tot-documents/>

vision, to formulate the plans of action, to discuss about the importance of communication, dialogue and negotiation and get exposure to the advocacy experience of the Land Workers Alliance. Of the total 20 participants, 2 came from Hungary and 3 from Croatia.



Farm2Fork, Hungary

*“I really appreciated the parts on emotions and communication, since those are parts in which we were weak. It pointed out the importance of dealing with the emotional parts and the importance of having good communication. I am still working on that, but the improvement is already visible!” (Nikolina Pokupeć)*

A **second 2-day ToT was carried out in Coventry** on 6-7<sup>th</sup> February 2019, with the overall objective of providing tools and concepts to the participants in order that they would be able to facilitate training or awareness-raising sessions in their own organizations and in their respective countries on the selected topics: the organization as a group, principles and values of farmer organizations, building a shared vision to strengthen organizational performance and equity, analysis of organizational performance, developing strategies and an action plan, and constructive dialogue and typologies. The ToT was complemented by a ‘Gaming Champion’ session, where participants were trained in different Gaming techniques developed during the BOND Project (see below).

*“Bond Playful Lego (BPL based on Lego Serious Play) - is a tool that I used myself at my association meetings and which gave me a clear insight into the relationship status of the members themselves. As such, it is very useful, although initially incomprehensible to farmers. It personally helped me to understand their behaviour within the association. I applied the learned knowledge and techniques from the ToT and Gaming Champion session in my association of agricultural producers in a way to further strengthen the cooperative community.” (Valentina Hažić)*

Finally, directly after the Regional Policy Roundtable organized in Hungary, Védegylet organized a ToT which took place in Kishantos between the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. This **training was conducted by trainers who had previously been trained during the ToT held in Córdoba and in Coventry. The training in Hungary helped them to internalize the methodology and content of the training and to be able to replicate it independently of the FAO team.** The training addressed men and women engaged in small-scale food production and/or involved in food and agriculture related local groups/associations, with the desire to catalyze co-operation and networks at local, national and regional levels. The general aim of the training was to strengthen collective action for food sovereignty of small-scale farmers and connected people within local and national networks and co-operations. Taking places over two days and a half, the training consisted of eight sessions: principles and values, organizing and putting in place collective structures and decision-making processes, communication and networking inside and outside cooperation and networks.

*“It was interesting, that we were aiming at solving problems that I have been thinking about before – for example what are the strengths and weaknesses that have a role in managing our social mission. I think we got a roadmap for how to overcome obstacles and find those barriers that we need to move. The composition of the group was really good, it was really interesting for me to listen to their comments and experiences. Trainers were loyal, helping participants to come to conclusion, they let us unfold. And we did unfold, smoothly and honestly.” (Erika Tóth)*

## 5.2.2. Tools and methodologies developed in the BOND Project

### 5.2.2.1. Participatory Methodology<sup>36</sup>

During the first phase of the BOND project, the University of Córdoba developed a participatory methodology oriented to foster bonding and bridging processes at territorial level, and adaptable to different contexts. Whether there are no organized groups of farmers, or there are consolidated and active groups of farmers in a territory, this methodology is useful to build or strengthen bonding processes, and to design or strengthen bridging strategies to foster, through collective action, the empowerment of farmers' organizations.

In December 2018 and January 2019, BOND conducted several workshops in 8 different countries, where the tools implemented by farmers committed and connected through BOND partners' organizations allowed participants to identify and discuss the attitudes, constraints and barriers to foster collective action in their context, as well as describing the social arena in which they could design strategies to foster processes of collective action in every country. These self-analyses of attitudes, constraints, and weaknesses related to collective action formed the basis of the design of the 10 National Workshops in order to better respond to their needs and aspirations, and to overcome them.

As a result of the Hungarian workshop, four main barriers and constraints were identified: (1) constraints of regulatory frameworks; (2) barriers in cultural attitudes; (3) commercialization and trust processes and (4) governance of collective processes. Each topic was further broken down into subtopics that were collected according to the arguments and votes given to a given subtopic. Under constraints of regulatory frameworks, the unsupportive policies on national, EU and non-EU level were given high importance, especially the inconsistency, complexity and difficulty of regulatory processes, plus the quantitative constraints of regulations for small-scale producers that prevent them from making a decent living. The market oriented toward large-scale producers was another issue, since currently even the regulation favours big, industrial producers and hinders the operation of small-holders and their processing activity.

36) "BOND Participatory Methodology" Last modified 11 April, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/participatory-methodology/>



Regarding the barriers in cultural attitudes, the lack of diversity in society, economy and in farms were highlighted, arguing that the current agricultural model prefers uniformity to the detriment of diversity. Also, the lack of collaboration and trust among farmers and rural producers limits the cooperation for establishing farmers' cooperatives. Within governance of collective processes, the lack of capacity and entrepreneurial management was mentioned together with the absence of knowledge and skills for good management. Finally, regarding commercialization and trust processes, the lack of time and capacity was identified as main constraint since small-scale farmers have to carry out all processes, from production to marketing, on their own. Also, the entitlements of small-scale producers selling on the market is questionable, the origin of the products can be uncertain as they might come from the wholesale markets.

Learning from the mapped barriers and constraints, three opportunities were identified as further steps: to work on capacity building, to foster diversification of farming culture and to develop supportive, consistent regulations. A strategy was suggested to reinforce the existing network of stakeholders in order to enhance their good management practices and advocacy power toward decisive authorities and bodies. As mentioned before, this gave a good starting point to design the National Workshop.

#### 5.2.2.2. *Gaming Techniques*<sup>37</sup>

Bond Playful Resources include experiential and participatory tools for facilitating an open, empathic, collaborative and creative environment for the project's stakeholders to connect with one another and to discover new insights on specific issues or topics towards forming better understanding, strategic visions and solutions. The project explored new ways of engaging farmers and policy-makers in activities that help ease understanding and promote the connection between them; specifically, the crossings between "play", "games" and "gamification" in order to provide a more elastic approach to fostering the building of social capital. This new interface facilitates greater capabilities for social learning and interactions. **The approach devises better ways of working with each other, to come up with common solutions and foster constructive alliances.** The approach is holistic and participatory to ensure that the needs of the stakeholders are taken into consideration.

In particular, **BOND Serious Play is an interactive and playful method for problem-solving and developing critical thinking skills.** The application of the method results in a rich environment that facilitates an engaging bonding experience. Bond Serious Play is a tool developed by Coventry University's Disruptive Media Learning Lab, which derives from the LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® methodology, a facilitation methodology created by The Lego Group. To trial the reception of playful methodologies with real end-users, in this case the approach of Lego Serious Play (LSP), as a method to discuss serious concepts and issues of the farming industry, a Lego Serious play session was delivered as a half-day workshop at the Gyüttment Farmers Festival in Hungary (August, 2018). Two facilitators from Coventry University used an open invitation system and the session was available to attend for all interested members of the public who participated in the festival. Later, this gaming interface was applied in the 4 regional policy roundtables in Romania, Poland, Portugal and Hungary (see below), as well as in the workshop for young farmers organized in Norway. All of these sessions were carried out with great success by non-professional facilitators: people who discovered the LSP method through the BOND project.

*"I like how different this method is; it brings people together to look for new solutions, it has a positive approach which is not boring at all, so everybody's attention is tied down and therefore everybody participates! It was not difficult to be the facilitator, as I received lots of support from the participants throughout the session."* (Boldizsár Horváth)

37) "BOND Gaming Techniques", Last modified 11 April 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/bond-playful-resources/> 38) Kislépték "BOND Regulatory Framework"

### 5.2.2.3. Regulatory Framework

This activity, carried out by the Kislépték Association, collected principles, rules, supportive measures to facilitate collective action, of relevance to farmers to overcome constraints and make this information available for farmers and civil society organizations. Constraints and good practices in different legal environments were identified, with a focus on supportive legal and regulatory environments and the provisions of the specific regulation in the farming sector. Legal terminology and definitions were studied in relation to the distinction between trading regulation, agricultural activity or civil operation, cooperative regulatory environment.

To highlight some legal issues common to Hungary and Croatia as well, it is worth mentioning that a business (agricultural) activity is not sustainable unless it ultimately does not provide a proper living, if its operational costs are larger than its predictable income. Proper living depends not only on the level of income but to a large extent, especially in the case of small-scale production, on the volume of the operational costs, taxes, government support and social security contributions. Therefore, flexible supportive regulations are needed to define agricultural activity in order to ensure the economic and social sustainability of farmers. The distinction and differentiated taxation of agricultural and non-agricultural activities entail the application of several methods and records at the same time, which complicates tax administration for the farmer.

Special forms of taxation typically are connected to private person taxation, but there are other forms. A good example for the taxation of small businesses (in some cases for start-ups) might be the so-called ‘micro business tax’, which may also be applied to agricultural incomes and triggers corporate tax. Moreover, there is a lack of differentiated regulation for small, medium and large producers, small and large food processors and rural service providers. Thus, there is need for regulations tailored to the size of small-scale agricultural producers and food processors.

Besides best practices and the revision of the regulatory environment, the study contains recommendations that can potentially support law-makers in a particular legal context. For further reading, the full study can be found on the website of the BOND Project.<sup>38</sup>

## 5.3. TELL



Policy Round Table on Green Public Catering organised by Védegyelet, Hungary

### 5.3.1. National thematic workshops<sup>39</sup>

10 national workshops were organized in 2019 with different stakeholders to work on three thematic areas: sustainable farming, access to markets and environmental sustainability. Other related areas and themes were included such as: access to credit, access to natural resources, the importance of coordinated action by pooling resources and knowledge, family farming, access to seeds, peasants’ rights, and cooperative development.

38) <https://www.bondproject.eu/regulatory-framework-2/>

39) “BOND National Workshops” Last modified 24 April 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/project-activities/national-thematic-workshops/>

### 5.3.1.1. National thematic workshops in Hungary

#### Explanation on Social and Solidarity Economy

Two national workshops were organized in Hungary under the auspices of BOND aiming for the creation of collective action in order to develop social enterprises with positive social impact on small-scale farmers. Both workshops were centred around the three thematic areas of sustainable farming; access to market and environmental sustainability. However, their specific objectives differed according to the expected final result of the workshops.

The first **National Workshop on the creation of professional collective action for social good economy** aimed to establish a common ground between the stakeholders of the social, institutional and agricultural sector in order to start a discussion on the opportunities for future cooperation. Participants included research institutes, members of the civil society and service sector as well as high-level decision-makers. The workshop successfully identified major obstacles to the development of social enterprises and related improvement opportunities; the need for tailor-made regulations (land-use, flexible hygienic rules for production, taxation) for social economy and sustainable farming was emphasized in order to enhance the effective operation of these enterprises. At the end of the workshop, the Social Farm certification trademark award was distributed among social farm cooperatives and associations.

While the first workshop welcomed participants mostly from the scientific and decision-making sector, the second **Workshop on Social/Common Good Economy in the countryside** – involved broader stakeholder groups such as farmers, consumers, farmers associations, food processors and other actors of the value chain. Participants proposed concrete recommendations and targeted development measures for social enterprises. This event also presented existing good practices and different forms of social enterprises and cooperatives in Hungary. For example, Nyíregyházi Kosár Közösség (Nyíregyháza Basket Community) presented their alternative of a short supply chain in the form of a box scheme operated for six years in Nyíregyháza. Participants learned how to create, develop such collective action and what type of co-operation is needed from the members and the necessary legal framework. Tánchos Kert showcased their community-supported agricultural farm built on permaculture permaculture and regenerative agriculture principles. They emphasized the need for lighter hygienic regulations for small businesses. Given the example that they were not able to start a small slaughterhouse establishment from their CSA community finance because they could not get support from the authorities as they did not comply with the current regulations.

The participants of the two workshops identified four major constraints to social enterprises and presented related policy recommendations and opportunities for development:

1. **Absent legislative awareness (visibility) of social farming and on social enterprises (social economy):** This was one of the major obstacles determined by the participants. Therefore, they agreed to the creation of a law specific to the social economy along with a national strategy and the establishment of a responsible governmental body that defines and raises public awareness on the importance of the social enterprises.
2. **Discouraging and often contradicting EU and national policies** (absence of adequate hygienic regulations for small enterprises, competitiveness focus of the CAP and rural development funds): In response to this constraint, participants recommended two main solutions: (1) EU and national legislation should encourage and create incentives for small enterprises in the form of targeted subsidies, flexible hygienic regulations, land use, employment and lighter administrative burdens; (2) Harmonization of EU and national policies and regulatory measures in order to enhance the number and effectiveness of social enterprises.
3. **New enterprises are not financially supported by the government:** It was unanimously agreed that the establishment of new businesses should be encouraged by the government in the form of subsidies, tax relief and funds from the very beginning (in the pre-financing stage).

4. **Lack of public visibility of social enterprises:** Several opportunities were raised to tackle this issue. First of all, the introduction of national labelling for social enterprises (trademark) would be essential to certify their positive social impact and also to enhance consumer awareness. Also, nationwide, communication campaigns on the benefits of social enterprises should be organized. Eligibility criteria should be introduced for social enterprises revolving around four interlinking factors in order to connect social impact with environmental protection: environmental sustainability, social good, community development and ethical behaviour. Furthermore, social impact assessment should be introduced in order to monitor the activity of social enterprises.

## SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

The term solidarity economy emerged in the 1980s and even today it has no unified definition. Solidarity Economy aims to transform the currently dominant capitalist system fuelled by the constant consumption and infinite growth paradigm, into one that promotes economic cooperation built on the principles of **economic democracy** and **ecological sustainability**. Such forms of economic cooperation existed before the notion of solidarity economy: foundations, public non-profit companies, cooperatives or social enterprises. Therefore, the solidarity economy provides a framework rather than a new economic model. From this point of view, the application of the idea of a solidarity economy today means a process of gaining practical experience, common learning, strategic planning and innovation regarding democratic and sustainable ways of organizing the economy.

Today, international research networks dealing with democratic and sustainable economic forms use the comprehensive term 'social solidarity economy' (SSE), distinguishing between 'social enterprise', 'cooperative' or 'social economy', which refer to specific economic forms, and the term 'solidarity economy', which includes a systemic transformation program.

## SOCIAL ECONOMY

The term arose in 19<sup>th</sup> century France – then other countries, mainly European countries and specifically EU countries these days, adopted the term; they mainly regard the 'social economy' from the point of view of employment and social policy. At present, one of the accepted definitions is that the social economy is made up of a diversity of enterprises and organizations such as cooperatives, associations, foundations and social enterprises among others, united around the primacy of people and the social objective over capital, democratic governance, solidarity and the reinvestment of most profits to carry out sustainable development objectives".<sup>40</sup>

In Hungary, the spread of the concept can be linked to the accession to the EU while it is also typical to adopt international definitions that emphasize the joint presence of social, community and economic goals and functions in the sector and their role in employment - primarily in line with EU approaches. At the same time, it is an important feature that in Hungary the definitions are often considered synonymous with the non-profit sector and state-owned organizations are not excluded from the definition.<sup>41</sup>

### 5.3.1.2. National workshop in Zagreb, Croatia

#### Explanation on Regenerative Agriculture

Legacoop Agroalimentare organized, in collaboration with the Croatian Agricultural Cooperatives and Associations, the National Workshop at the Technological Pole and the Mariapolis Faro center in Krizevci (Zagreb, Croatia). The focus of the event was regenerative agriculture as a method to restructure the soil and improve its production capacity which, otherwise, in the current consumption rates would be exhausted over the next 60 years.

During the workshop a variety of experiences were introduced, from different small-scale biodynamic farms to more complex structures such as a cooperative producing cereals and beef with export-import relations with the European Union and also other countries of the world. The Italian experience of the community cooperative Torri Superiore in Liguria and the Norwegian advanced cooperation in the collection of milk, meat, and cereals were showcased as interesting models of cooperation. During the three days, the participants had the opportu-

40) "Social Economy", Last modified 24 April, 2020 <https://www.socialeconomy.eu.org/>

41) Futó Péter, Hanthy Kinga, Lányi Pál, Mihály András, Soltész Anikó "A szociális gazdaság jelene és jövője Magyarországon" Nemzeti Felnőttképzési Intézet: 2005

nity to exchange ideas and experiences on regenerative agriculture and community development, and to build a common vision as a collective. The workshop closed on the third day with a practical case, in which an attempt was made to develop an action plan for the revitalization of the rural village of Vojakovac. The action plan was built around three main areas:

1. **Collective action and community development:** Participants agreed that the organization of awareness raising events or workshops on the benefits of sustainable farming and collective action through farmer groups, associations, and cooperatives is essential for collective action. In the meantime, sharing positive stories that can influence and change mindsets on cooperation along with putting emphasis on online tools and use of social media to mobilize the youth on the importance of local communities are paramount. Also, it was emphasized that from an early age, one should promote education on the importance of solidarity, cooperation and peer-to-peer exchanges among farmers on sustainable farming and community development.
2. **Creation of enabling environment:** This refers to advocacy activities launched by farming communities that enable them to participate in decision-making processes in order to shape the rules on sustainable farming and to create incentives for farmers using good practices. To this end, the creation of representative small farmer groups at national and EU level must be achieved to attract investments for the development of local communities and municipalities
3. **Specific actions to upscale sustainable farming and regenerative agriculture:** These included the organization of info days on regenerative agriculture and the creation of a center for disseminating good agricultural practices. The development of new tools for green technology, and the creation of an online inventory of good farming models were also important. Encouraging women to participate in agriculture was also deemed important via the exchange of good examples of woman-led farms.

The participants agreed to form a task group to promote and implement regenerative agriculture in the country, starting from their respective communities and engaging in information, education and creating demonstration plots. The actors started working on the above-mentioned action plan immediately and have taken extra education on regenerative agriculture and are one step closer to becoming an accredited Savory Hub.<sup>42</sup> They are now working on a certification model as a part of the Savory hub business strategies. Moreover, the Ecological association Vojakovac is preparing for a LIFE project whose purpose is to establish a center for regenerative agriculture, researching and promoting the practices in Croatia.

**REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE** is a conservation and rehabilitation approach to food and farming systems. It focuses on topsoil regeneration, increasing biodiversity, improving the water cycle, enhancing ecosystem services, supporting biosequestration, increasing resilience to climate change, and strengthening the health and vitality of farm soil. Practices include recycling as much farm waste as possible, adding composted material from sources outside the farm and using animals in their natural behaviours to enhance all of the positive outcomes of the method. According to Terra Genesis International's definition, Regenerative Agriculture is a system of farming principles and practices that increases biodiversity, enriches soils, improves watersheds, and enhances ecosystem services. At the same time, it offers increased yields, resilience to climate instability, and higher health and vitality for farming and ranching communities.<sup>43</sup>

### 5 Core Principles of Regenerative Agriculture



### 3 Key Outcomes

- Improve soil health
- Foster biodiversity
- Promote economic resilience in farming communities

42) The Savory Institute is the most famous global movement of regenerative agriculture farmers and land managers. Hubs are Holistic Management training, learning and demonstration sites. "Savory Hub" Last modified 24 April, 2020 <https://savory.global/our-network/>

43) "Regenerative Agriculture" Last modified 24 April, 2020 <http://www.regenerativeagriculturedefinition.com/>



The carrying capacity of an environment is the maximum population size of a biological species that can be sustained in that specific environment, given the food, habitat, water, and other resources available.

### 5.3.2. Regional Policy Roundtable in Hungary

During the BOND project Védegyelet coordinated 4 Regional Policy Roundtables<sup>44</sup> (in Romania, Poland, Portugal and Hungary) with the aim to develop links and relationships between farmers, “land managers’ groups” and policy makers, and other key stakeholders, at all levels (from local, to regional, national and EU level). These can facilitate a mutual understanding of different realities (and sometimes conflicting world-views, logics and interests) and result in coordinated action. During the roundtables participatory methods were used as the new interfaces, toolkits and platforms for understanding each other and building alliances.

The Regional Policy Roundtable organized in Hungary by Védegyelet was entitled “Collective action for green public catering based on quality food” and took place on 4-5th February 2020 in Budapest, Hungary. More than 40 participants were representing a diverse range of constituencies such as farmers’ organizations, civil society organizations, health institutions, private enterprises, legal experts; this diversity and their active participation truly enriched the exchanges of both days. Experts from Brazil, Hungary, Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom and Sweden shared their respective realities, achievements and challenges related to sustainable school canteens.<sup>45</sup> During the two days, participants had the possibility to exchange, debate, network and co-create policy recommendations.

The Regional Policy Roundtable provided space for participants to develop policy recommendations on green public catering. Four major policy clusters were differentiated based on the challenges identified by the participants, each containing specific recommendations and measures involving and targeting relevant stakeholder groups:

#### **Policy cluster 1 - Policy recommendations targeting the primary sector and food production**

This cluster emerged as a response to the lack of aptitude and motivation of farmers to organize themselves or organize into a collective which makes the quantity targets of public caterers difficult to meet by the farmers. Moreover, the benefits of organic agricultural production is not well communicated to farmers both at the national and regional level.

The following recommendations were developed to tackle this issue:

- solicit targeted, regular government support for farmers to convert their production into organic;
- create an enabling environment (through funding) for existing organic farmers’ organizations and individual organic farmers to form local and territorial-level commercial collectives that can help to provide quality fresh food that meets the quantity expectations of public caterers;
- create pilot programs (or support the visibility of existing programs) on a municipal level that connects organic provision of food with public catering;
- support the creation of local food hubs based on territorial characteristics (e.g., Kecskemét center for fresh fruits and vegetables, Szeged hub for freshwater fish).

44) “BOND Regional Policy Roundtable” Last modified April 25, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/project-activities/regional-policy-roundtables/>

45) Video recordings can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLINV22WU49K-fu2HrD0ZxIH-1ibk8ti3E>

### Policy cluster 2 – Policy recommendations targeting the regulatory system

The following main challenges helped this cluster to form: unsupportive fiscal system, high VAT on food, lack of free choice of diet, difficult and involute administrative requirements and burdens on farmers/small-scalers and caterers. The following recommendations emerged:

- revision of existing terminology on public catering through the involvement of relevant stakeholders;
- reduction of VAT on food;
- reduction of the administrative burdens on small-scale farmers and caterers by the simplification and harmonization of different regulations;
- harmonization of the work of different food experts (e.g. dietitians, chefs or sustainability officers);
- free choice of diets by lifting the diet regulation of meat;
- support of the infrastructural needs of green catering by creating guides for special kitchens in schools, hospitals.

### Policy cluster 3 – Policy recommendations targeting education, communication and dissemination

Issues of limited competence, limited educations and communication at different decision-making levels were noted during the roundtable. Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations were developed:

- provide government support through funding and public education; develop educational materials, guidelines on green catering and diets; include public catering and healthy diets into the school curriculum; ensure the education and training of parents and teachers alike;
- support the training and education of caterers and kitchen workers through specific vocational training;
- create national consultation on public catering to enhance the public discussion on its importance;
- create feedback mechanisms for all the stakeholders of public catering, and social enterprises and farmers;
- promote public catering and healthy diets for government workers and public servants;
- launch communication and awareness-raising campaigns on healthy diet;
- support the creation of technical advisory systems for tender and proposal writing for public caterers.

### Policy Cluster 4 – Policy recommendations targeting governance

In response to corruption, an emerging preference for satisfying the interests of big catering corporations, the lack of funding at the local level and the centralized decision-making process, participants identified the following recommendations for actions:

- create mechanisms or open platforms that ensure the inclusion of the interests and opinions of all stakeholders of public catering into the decision-making process (parents, students, farmers, lawyers, dietitians);
- make good examples visible through online and offline platforms: for instance, farms visits, school gardens (e.g. Nyitott Kertek/Open Gardens initiative)<sup>46</sup>
- have clear sustainability criteria and targets in public catering, such as waste reduction, environmental impacts and costs, equitable wages;
- encourage and create incentives for small enterprises via targeted subsidies, flexible hygienic regulations, land use, employment and lighter administrative burdens
- define realistic and simple targets for local healthy diets – depending on the country need (100% organic food or 85% organic food);
- ensure policy coherence and harmonization at all levels from the EU-level to the municipal-level

During the first day, a Lego Serious Play gaming session (see in Chapter Learn) was carried out and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed (see in Chapter Formalizing agreements with different constituencies: Memoranda of Understanding).

*“I really liked the professional work done by the main organizer, the adequate selection of participants that really helped to understand the problematic, the presented solutions in different contexts. Overall, it was a supportive, positive event in which progress could be made – on a personal, but on a professional level as well, since it was a fantastic opportunity for Participant of the Policy Roundtable.”*

46) “Open Gardens” Last modified, 13 June, 2020 <http://nyitottkertek.hu/>

## SUSTAINABLE GREEN SCHOOL CANTEENS

Why are green public procurement and green catering important?

- to save energy: Decreased global transportation
- to re-localize supply chains therefore contributes to GHG emission reduction
- to conserve the land: farmer retention in agriculture
- to stabilize rural communities: increased viability of farming and related activities
- to enhance trust and regional cohesion through rural-urban linkages
- to increase traceability and accountability in local management
- to revitalize agricultural communities through the support of producers' livelihoods
- to enhance local culinary culture via the promotion of local produce
- to contribute to food security via increased access to fresh, nutritious and less processed food
- to increase food sovereignty by substituting import
- to increase regional income retention via local market creation
- to create greener economies by developing new and independent marketplaces
- to increase the share of organic products, therefore supporting small-scale local farmers
- to avoid the consumption of fish and marine products from depleted stocks
- to promote an increased offer in plant-based menus
- to avoid food waste and improving the overall management of waste
- to avoid the use of single-use items
- to reduce energy consumption in kitchens and vending machines
- to reduce water consumption in kitchens



Picture: © Járdány Bence / Greenpeace Hungary



The European Union Green Public Procurement (GPP) is a voluntary instrument with a key role to play in EU's efforts to become a more resource-efficient economy. It can help stimulate a critical mass of demand for more sustainable goods and services which otherwise would be difficult to access the market. The GPP is, therefore, a strong stimulus for eco-innovation, and green public catering plays a major part in this.

To be effective, the GPP requires the inclusion of clear and verifiable environmental criteria for products and services in the public procurement process. The European Commission and a number of European countries have developed guidance in this area, in the form of national GPP criteria. The challenge of increasing uptake by more public sector bodies so that the GPP becomes common practice still remains. As does the challenge of ensuring that green purchasing requirements are somewhat compatible between Member States - thus helping create a level playing field that will accelerate and help drive the single market for environmentally sound goods and services.

Public procurement for a better environment<sup>47</sup> and Buying Green! - A Handbook on green public procurement are basically the Commission's guidance on how to reduce the environmental impact caused by public sector consumption and how to use the GPP to stimulate innovation in environmental technologies, products and services. At EU level, the European Commission set an indicative target that, by 2010, 50% of all public tendering procedures should be green, where 'green' means compliant with endorsed common core EU GPP criteria.

Only these documents and policies reflect on green public catering; there is no specific guidance on green public catering in the EU. However, FAO published the School Food and Nutrition Framework<sup>48</sup> in 2019 that aims to support countries, governments and institutions to develop, transform or strengthen school-based or school-relevant policies, programs and other initiatives for an enhanced and synergistic impact on diets, child and adolescent nutrition, community socioeconomic development and local food systems. Also, FAO developed an accompanying factsheet on Sustainable Local Procurement to support various stakeholders in establishing and undertaking public food procurement schemes and processes.

There are European signatory cities on green public catering such as Copenhagen or Mouans Sartoux. In Copenhagen, 89% of food, in Mouans Sartoux 100% of food prepared in public canteens – day-care centres, nursing homes, schools – are provisioned from organic farms, therefore supporting local producers, the development of organic supply chains and enhancing rural-based gastronomy. The emphasis in diets has shifted toward less meat, more seasonal vegetables, fruits, baking, preserving, fermenting, reduction of food waste.

Other example is Sweden where Södertälje Municipality launched Diet for a Green Planet program that introduces tasty and healthy diets into kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, institutions for elderly people using locally sourced, organic products with more vegetables and less animal products and minimizing leftovers. Scotland developed a very successful, first National Food and Drink Policy in 2009 that fundamentally altered diets and attitude toward diets in Scottish schools and kindergartens. It resulted in a record turnover of 14.3 billion pounds in 2013 and 24% increase since 2008. The policy was followed by the even more ambitious Good Food Nation Bill in 2020 which provides a statutory framework for Scotland's effort to promote healthier and more sustainable local produce.

There are more specifically focused green catering projects in Europe, like Albert SAS in Italy. They successfully developed and managed projects for the introduction of fresh fish in schools, hospitals and care homes. Launched educational and nutritional campaigns promoted by Marche Region in Italy such as the Eat well, grow as fit as a fish, Fresh Fish in School and in Hospitals projects aim to develop best practices and models for the consumption of fresh fish in the region.

47) "Public procurement for a better environment" Last modified 24 April, 2020 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52008DC0400>  
 48) FAO. "School Food and Nutrition Framework" Last modified 24 April, 2020 <http://www.fao.org/3/ca4091en/ca4091en.pdf>

### 5.3.3. Formalizing agreements with different constituencies:

#### Memoranda of Understanding<sup>49</sup>

One of the outcomes of the BOND Project was the drafting of specific agreements in the form of **8 “Memoranda of Understanding” (MoU) for collective action in specific fields, to be implemented during and after project completion.** The memoranda were agreed upon between farmer/land manager groups, other key stakeholders and policy-makers. In order to identify the potential countries and partners for the MoU, the Kislépték Association developed a survey<sup>50</sup> as an initial step, involving more than 100 people from 20 different countries during the Interregional Forum in Córdoba.

At the Regional Policy Round Table organized by Védegylet in Hungary, eight organizations signed the Memorandum of Understanding aiming to promote the social economy, address the environmental and social challenges of agriculture, rural livelihood and green public catering in Hungary. The purpose of the Hungarian MoU is to facilitate, support and strengthen the coordination of joint activities with a view to improving the social and economic sustainability of the environment, including the social economy, local food systems and the short supply chain. The organizations were: Ethnic Folk College Association, Kemence Association, Hungarian Social Farm Association, Védegylet, National Chamber of Agriculture, Kislépték Association, Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta and National Strategic Research Institute.

Another MoU was signed between Hungarian and Romanian organizations with the objective of outlining their form of collective action, their cooperation on organising and/or participating on farm visits for farmers, artisans of any age, specially working in small farm and has limited access for an up-to-date and diverse knowledge. The intention of the parties is to enlarge this cooperation involving more farms and farmers and creating a network. Currently the MoU is signed by Kislépték, Eco Ruralis, Nagykörű (Living Tisza, Hungary) and Ferma Ecologica Topa (Romania).

In Croatia, two Memorandum of Understandings were signed. The first one was signed between the Ecological Association of Vojakovac and the city of Križevci with the aim of supporting better policymaking and legislation for the food and agricultural sector in Croatia as to improve market access; to develop, promote and strengthen joint actions related to more inclusive and efficient agricultural and food systems that strengthens family farming and supports sustainable agricultural practices such as agroecology. The second MoU was signed by the Ecological Association of Vojakovac, the family farm of Ivan Kekez and the family farm of Nikolina Pokupec with the purpose of developing a joint vision and way of collaboration for the setting up the centre of regenerative agricultural methods where the family farms of the two representatives undertake the work as a pilot farm for these objectives.

49) “BOND Memorandum of Understanding” Last modified 24 April, 2020 <https://www.bondproject.eu/memorandum-of-understanding/>

50) The result of the survey can be found here: [https://www.bondproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/MoU\\_Survey\\_Report\\_20181130\\_EN\\_FF.pdf](https://www.bondproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/MoU_Survey_Report_20181130_EN_FF.pdf)





# 6 Impact of the BOND activities in Hungary and Croatia

## Impact of the BOND activities in Hungary and Croatia

We have conducted individual interviews with the 10 Hungarian and Croatian BOND representatives in order to gain a better insight into what they appreciated in the BOND activities, what was useful for them and their organizations and how the project changed them and their organizations.

The most appreciated BOND activity was the **Study Tours**, and according to the interviews, it is also the activity that had an impact on all of the representatives. Participants highlighted the importance of networking and connecting in such circumstances with other like-minded people, to know their personal motivations and to draw strength and inspiration from hearing interesting stories from other parts of Europe, to increase the feeling of “we are not alone in this” - the sense of belonging to a wider community. In addition to the personal development that the study tours catalyzed, participants emphasized the great usefulness to discover, first hand, a diversity of good examples of collective action involving a variety of different stakeholders, and to be able to discuss these directly with the very people operating and leading successful examples of cooperation. Interviewees also stated that the study tours were very well organized, and the selection of initiatives presented was truly appropriate, as participants could easily link those different examples to their own realities and make comparisons. This insight is important as the interviews prompted participants to reflect on their own situation and how to adapt good examples that were explored during the study tour in more detail. Having a direct connection and possibility to address doubts and concerns about different issues, certainly was another element of the study tours that was very useful for their learning experience.

According to the representatives’ answers, not only did their knowledge on different forms of collective action significantly grow, but now all of them realize the importance of the study tours and their impact at different levels and on different aspects of their work and organizing. They argued that they had harvested enough knowledge on these study tours to initiate a change in their organization, on “how to connect and create a common goal, create connections, work synergistically, achieve their goals”.

This perspective was reinforced at the **Interregional Forum** where participants had the opportunity to discover a diversity of realities, struggles and challenges in other countries and ways to overcome them. They found empowering and highly motivating the exchange of experiential knowledge with a large variety of actors from all over Europe. They discovered how the forms of farmers’ cooperation vary from country to country, but all are beneficial for efficiency.

*“I learnt that we have similar struggles all over Europe, even if we are from different countries with different histories. We need to be united and act collectively on matters important to all of us!”*

Another aspect that is worth mentioning are the two side-events: the seed swapping and the farmers’ market - both were remarkably welcomed by all participants.

A further activity that had a great impact on representatives was the **Training of Trainers (ToT)**. Participants were eager to learn different methodologies and tools on topics relevant for themselves and their organization (leadership styles, emotional spaces, communication, action plan development) and in which they felt that they were weak before the ToT. They really appreciated the hands-on and easily usable methodologies and tools, and the learning opportunities the ToT created. The fact that participants were well guided by the facilitators through the whole designing process leading up to the development of an action plan was celebrated by most of them.

Three representatives that were trained on ToTs carried out by FAO team had the possibility to facilitate ToT sessions themselves, in Hungarian in Hungary, with the support of the FAO team. This practical element was beneficial on three levels: first, representatives could consolidate the acquired knowledge by

being the one delivering the content of the training – *as the latin proverb says: “by teaching, we learn”*. Second, it was a great opportunity for the representatives to take on the role of facilitators while having the support of a professional team from FAO; this strengthened not only the impact but also the sustainability of the project as the aim of the ToTs is to train facilitators or trainers who can pass on their learning and disseminate the acquired knowledge to a wider public. And third, facilitating the training in a local language (Hungarian, in this case) rather than English, opened the possibility to include participants with language barriers, and therefore, enlarge the number of beneficiaries.

Some of the participants had the opportunity to try out the **Gaming Techniques** either at the *Gyüttment Festival* in Hungary, or the Gaming Champion training in Coventry or at the Regional Policy Roundtable in Hungary. All of them were greatly satisfied with these interactive and playful methods for problem-solving and developing critical thinking skills. In the case of the BOND Playful Lego, based on the LEGO Serious Play, they really liked how the methodology combined the highly professional and the humane approaches, the way it raised enthusiasm and engaged everybody in the process of co-thinking. They found it to be a positive approach, whereby everybody participates creatively and learns to actively listen to the other.

At the Hungarian Regional Policy Roundtable, two representatives were the facilitators of the session using the innovative gaming technique to exchange ideas among the various stakeholders present at the roundtable. Both of them testified that it was a pleasant experience to facilitate the session, as it was highly participatory and therefore the people taking part did most of the work. The success of this method was supported by the fact that all the representatives who tried these methods would use it again in their own organization.

The **National Workshops** organized in the two countries had both similarities and differences. Croatian representatives showed a very engaged and active attitude; not only did all five of them participate in the workshop, but three of them were also the organizers of the three-day event.

According to them, to organize their own workshop on a topic of importance to them was a very demanding yet inspiring opportunity at the same time. Representatives had the chance to present their own practical examples of how their associations worked as well as sharing, exchanging and talking with international participants and other relevant stakeholders, like municipal actors and legal experts. Participants considered this to be a catalyst event on the topic of regenerative agriculture in their national context. It triggered change, and the ideas are now moving to a higher level of realization of cooperation between actors interested by similar concepts.

One representative who was actively involved in the Hungarian National Workshop said that she made new networking contacts and the event helped her to see and understand other criteria systems and why it was useful to merge a variety of criteria, as she put it: *“alone we cannot represent everything, so it is very good to work in partnership”*. The event helped her organization to advocate and include the aspect of farming in the larger scope of the social economy and to be one of the focal points for later on this topic.

One of the BOND representatives was in charge of organizing the **Regional Policy Roundtable in Hungary** on *“Collective action for green public catering based on quality food”*. She described it as a great challenge yet also a very rewarding one, as she managed to gather various crucial complementary international and national participants around one table; these participants had not usually had the chance to debate these topics together which is why dialogue and many opportunities for cooperation were hallmarks of the event. Another BOND participant stated that she greatly appreciated the international professional scene and the diversity of knowledges presented, and even though she had been involved in the issue for a while, she still acquired new knowledge.

More than half of the Croatian and Hungarian representatives were involved in the process of the **Memorandum of Understandings (MoU)**, either by organizing it (bringing together the partnership, wording and translating it), or by signing it. All of them found it a useful tool that can be used as a template to form cooperation with various types of organizations in the future, at least as starting points for building cooperation between various actors in rural development, cities, NGOs, farming and other organizations. They hope that its signature will strengthen collaboration among the different signatories. They are all aware that observing the agreement needs motivation but as they chose the topic and formulated themselves the content of the MoU, so they are greatly committed to it and take responsibility for carrying it out to fruition.

From the interviews with the BOND participants, we can draw several important points. First, **well-organized study tours and activities where farmers, land managers and other relevant stakeholders meet are remarkably powerful activities on different levels**: (a) the knowledge transfer is highly efficient as participants see the examples in person and have the possibility to address questions directly with the actors involved; (b) therefore, not only is their knowledge more solid, but their motivation in engaging with that given issue becomes greater; last but not least, (c) these situations create a more relaxed atmosphere to connect, exchange and create bonding relations with others that foster cooperation and collaboration: the basis for collective action.

Second, we can notice **how influential and crucial it becomes to involve participants as active actors (for example as organizers, facilitators) in different activities as long as this involvement is paired with appropriate theoretical, logistical and financial support**. The results from these activities will have a greater impact long term, and participants become empowered actors of change. It is necessary to highlight the **importance of appropriate support**, as most often farmers, land managers and other relevant stakeholders lack the necessary means or the basic resources to initiate cooperation that could bring significant changes.

Third, the **flow and diverse types of activities** allowed the unfolding of several important topics approaching them from different angles: formal, practical, action-oriented. This approach was meaningful for two reasons: (a) it allowed a wider participation of relevant actors, and (b) it resulted in concrete tools that could be used by the participants or adapted to other topics relevant to them.



7 Conclusions,  
recommendations  
and ways forward



## Conclusions, recommendations and ways forward

As previously highlighted, Hungary and Croatia share a similar history and attitude towards cooperatives and other forms of collective action in the farming sector: there is a general distrust among farmers and land managers in these terms and actions. However, in the past decade, promising grassroots initiatives have been growing and scaled out in both countries, showing new forms of collective action and renewed faith in them. Nevertheless, these initiatives need support of different kinds for their further development: legal, financial, administrative and educational. This is one of the reasons why the BOND project was a truly important step in the two countries in the process of reaching higher levels of organization and networking, and developing a healthier, and more productive and harmonious farming sector in Europe for the long term. During the activities of the project, 5 Hungarian and 5 Croatian representatives were engaged in study tours, an interregional forum, the training of trainers and other BOND events such as the national workshops and regional policy roundtable. The following important conclusions can be drawn when combining the learnings and outcomes of the flow of the BOND activities:

- Networking and territorial solidarity are key aspects to a transformative change of the food system.  
*It is essential to **strengthen territorial solidarity and cooperate beyond borders**. This means not only to create networks of initiatives with similar objectives in different regions of Europe, and to link these, but also to think holistically about the impact of European farming activities outside the European Union and continent.*
- Discovering in person model initiatives and farms, meeting and sharing experience with other individual actors has a genuine strong impact and triggers more action.  
*Importance of **study tours and other forms of personal exchanges**, strengthen **farmer-to-farmer knowledge sharing**, need for **independent model farms and their network**.*
- Training and tools adapted to the needs of farmers, land managers and other related actors empower farming communities and their environment.  
*Relevance of **capacity building trainings**, **participatory methodologies** (active involvement of stakeholders), **organizational development tools**, easy-to-understand **regulatory framework guides** and their **availability in various languages**.*
- These new spaces of multi-stakeholder interactions generate impact on many levels  
*Importance of **involving a variety of relevant stakeholders** (farmers, land managers, NGOs, researchers, policy makers, etc.) to **enrich debates, exchanges and co-thinking**, regular dialogue is crucial to **co-create well-adapted policies and other actions** to the farming, food and any other related sectors in an **intersectoral and interdisciplinary** way.*
- Farmers, land-managers and related organizations are powerful change-makers of our society, but they need support.  
*Flexible, **well-targeted** (previously assessed on their specific needs) **legal, financial and educational support** is needed, while **engaging actively farmers, land managers and related organizations** in the different processes: from the design, to the preparation works and to the actual implementation.*
- Put Agroecology at the heart of food system policies, practices and related research.  
*It is auspicious to see that the European agricultural research community has begun to acknowledge Agroecology - as it is explicitly mentioned in the new Horizon Europe framework program as a promising alternative to lead agricultural research efforts to transform the European agri-food sector. However, agroecology needs to be put at the heart of the agricultural and food policies at international, European and member-state level.*

- **Success through diversity:** Europe still has a diversity of farming practices, but they are very much endangered, and so are biodiversity and traditional food cultures.  
*In order to **create resilient ecosystems**, we need to **cherish diversity** (age, gender, nationality, knowledge, ways of production and so on) **with adapted policies and production facilities**. **Small-scale farms are pools of diversity** of natural resources and farming related activities – this should be acknowledged and valued.*

These highly relevant points are completely in line with the objectives of the EU's Biodiversity and Farm to Fork strategy and the new CAP, and are clearly shaping the EU's agriculture toward more sustainable, circular and climate-friendly approaches and practical solutions. Therefore, national policies should also support initiatives that promote our conclusions outlined above. Projects, such as BOND and the related activities of its partner organizations, are crucial to paving the way towards regenerative food systems.

*“The challenge of our generation is regeneration. Starting from the soil up, we are faced with our very survival as species. We need everyone to play his or her part in the story. All people, with all their gifts, strengths and talents, poised to contribute at every level of society. The problems we face today are extremely complex, and we all know that it will take the full spectrum of human ingenuity to step up, as well as the wisdom to step back when it is appropriate, to allow nature to do her work alone. Healthy soils, functional communities, thriving ecosystems, respectful relating are things we all want. As the basis of civilisation, agriculture must play a large part in restoration (...) at the heart of it the core tenets remain the same: capture carbon and sequester it back into our soils; reinvigorate local economies whilst restoring the pride back into land stewardship, and reignite the passion we all share for real food whilst stimulating neighbourhood and community connections.”*

Richard Perkins

*“Regenerative Agriculture: A Practical Whole System Guide to Making Small Farms Work”*



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