



MEL REPORT

DELIVERABLE 1.2 (V1)

WP1 Scoping and sourcing for impact



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PU	Public (fully open)	X
SEN	Sensitive, limited under the conditions of the Gran Agreement	

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) report (D1.2) provides an overview of the B-Trust project's progress during its initial phase, from December 2023 to November 2024, **highlighting outputs, outcomes, and insights** aligned with B-Trust's Theory of Change (ToC).

It outlines the **MEL framework**, which provides a structured approach to tracking progress and ensuring alignment with B-Trust's desired outcomes and impact areas, as illustrated in the ToC. The framework defines **means of verification for outputs**, Key Performance **Indicators (KPIs)** for outcomes, **target groups**, and **data collection tools**. Additionally, it outlines practical steps for operationalising the framework for tracking progress and enabling iterative learning throughout the project.

For B-Trust's ToC, key work packages considered are: WP2 (Co-creating for Impact), WP3 (Workshops and Training for Innovation Uptake and a Validated Co-creation Programme), and WP5 (Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability, and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum), with relevant activities from WP4 (Communication, dissemination and community building) integrated within the scope of WP5. These work packages were chosen because the primary or core project activities will be executed within them, and hence, they will generate the most critical outputs and outcomes for the project. Other work packages of the project, specifically WP1 (Scoping and Sourcing for Impact), WP4, and WP6 (Project Management & Coordination), are not fully or partially included in the Theory of Change as they primarily serve as supportive elements of project implementation.

This deliverable outlines **key results** by providing insights into the progress and outcomes of key activities under active work packages: **WP2 - Co-creating for Impact** and **WP5 - Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability, and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum**. Core activities of WP2 focused on co-creation sessions in Belgium and Denmark, exploring consumer perspectives on biotechnology and cell factories as innovative solutions for food production challenges. These sessions enhanced participants' understanding of biotechnology's risks, benefits, and applications, fostering a more informed and positive perception. Furthermore, these sessions provided valuable insights into consumer perceptions of the risks and benefits associated with biotechnology. WP5 highlights the launch of the B-Trust Forum and the implementation of the first masterclass, "Co-Creating Biotech Trust in Agri-Food and Bio-Based Industries." The masterclass emphasised consumer acceptance and stakeholder engagement, receiving positive feedback for its content and methodology. Moreover, the project's communication and dissemination activities have successfully expanded the project's visibility, leveraging social media and networks to enhance outreach.

Lastly, the deliverable **outlines the main achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and updates to B-Trust's Theory of Change (ToC)** for the reporting period considered. Achievements include the selection and Risk-Benefit Assessments of six biotech cases, successful co-creation sessions in Belgium and Denmark, stakeholder mapping, the launch of the B-Trust Forum and website, and the implementation of the first masterclass. Challenges include recruiting diverse participants, low engagement in the masterclass, resource constraints and fostering forum participation. Key lessons or areas of improvement emphasise



the importance of neutral communication, targeted outreach, and integrating diverse perspectives, mainly through the 5H actor approach. Updates to the ToC include mitigation measures addressing risks across work packages to improve project execution.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BIC- Bio-based Industries Consortium

B-TRUST- Co-creation methodology for biotechnology trust-building measures for improved innovation uptake in the bio-based innovation system.

CA – Consortium Agreement

CBE-JU Circular Based Europe Joint Undertaking

D – Deliverable

DoA – Description of Action

EC – European Commission

GA – General Assembly

H2020 – Horizon 2020 The 8th EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation.

HEU – Horizon Europe – the 9th framework Programme of the EC for research, technological development and innovation activities.

IPR – Intellectual Property Right

KPIs - Key Performance Indicators

MEL - Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

MoU - Memorandum of Understanding

PC – Project Coordinator

SC – Steering Committee

SME – Small and Medium Enterprise

ToC - Theory of Change

WP – Work package



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1. INTRODUCTION

The first Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Report aims to capture the key results achieved by the B-Trust project by highlighting the outputs, outcomes, and lessons learned from the implemented project activities. As part of **Task 1.2: Reporting via the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Framework**, LAMA will deliver MEL reports at three stages of the project: M12 (November 2024), M22 (September 2025), and M30 (May 2026). These reports will offer feedback to B-Trust's consortium partners, helping them recognise deviations from the plan, adjust activities, and work towards achieving the desired outcomes and results efficiently.

The **MEL framework** is a systematic approach to impact assessment that tracks and assesses the project's progress and identifies areas for improvement or lessons to improve future activities or initiatives. The components of the framework are defined as follows:

- **Monitoring** is a continuous process of tracking key progress and outputs related to the project's activities to ensure they are delivered as planned.
- **Evaluation** focuses on assessing the progress of the project's activities by measuring the outcomes achieved against the set goals and determining how effectively the project is meeting its objectives, as stated in B-Trust's Theory of Change.
- **Learning** emphasises reflecting on the project's progress, identifying what works well and what does not, under what conditions and why and drawing key lessons to adjust and improve future activities. Moreover, it will assess the intervention logic to identify the deviations and determine mitigation measures for B-Trust's consortium partners to adopt, ensuring the project achieves its desired objectives.

This first iteration of the MEL Report covers the period from **Month 1 (December 2023) to Month 12 (November 2024)**, focusing on activities and tasks that have been initiated or completed. The outputs and outcomes identified in B-Trust's Theory of Change¹ (Figure 1) are a reference for designing the MEL activities and subsequent data collection, ensuring alignment with the impact pathways that the project seeks to achieve. Moreover, B-Trust's Theory of Change (ToC) is designed as a living document; it will evolve with input and continuous refinement from all partners throughout the monitoring and evaluation of the project activities to ensure alignment with the intended outcomes and impact.

1.1 Structure of Deliverable

The rest of the deliverable is organised across the following sections:

- **Section 2: Methodology** discusses the design of the MEL framework and the protocol for operationalising the framework, emphasising the practical steps for implementation. It also elaborates on the various data collection activities undertaken to support the first MEL report.

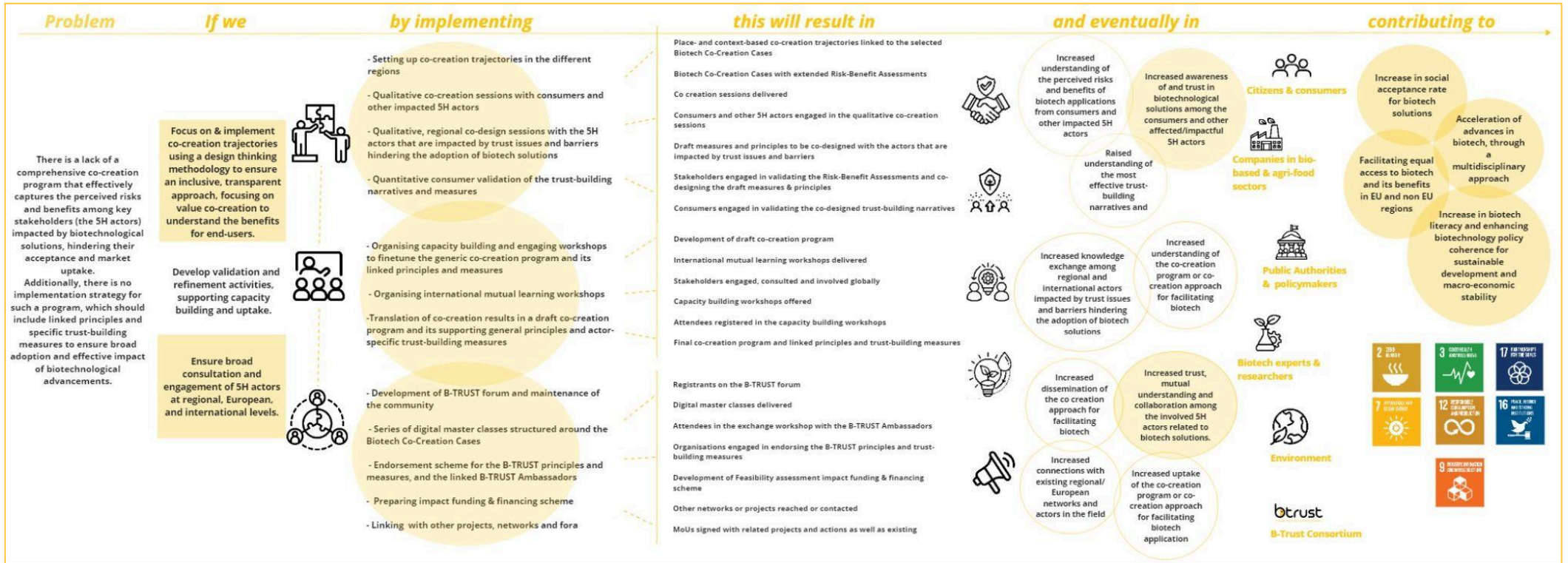
¹ For detailed information refer to Deliverable 1.1 Theory of Change.



- **Section 3: Results** present a detailed analysis of the core findings in relation to the primary activities carried out within the project. This section is divided into two parts: the first part outlines the outputs and outcomes associated with main activities across each work package, while the second part delves into the key learning outcomes derived within the project period.
- **Section 4: Conclusions** describe the next steps in relation to the task.



Figure 1 - B-Trust's Theory of Change





2. METHODOLOGY

B-Trust's Theory of Change (Figure 1) presents a clear framework outlining the pathways (activities, outputs and outcomes) to achieving the project's intended impact, with a specific focus on the key Work Packages² (WPs) of the project, particularly **WP2 - Co-creating for Impact**, **WP3 - Workshops and Training for Innovation Uptake and a Validated Co-creation Programme**, and **WP5 - Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability, and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum**, with relevant activities from WP4 - Communication, dissemination and community building, mainly development of B-Trust Forum and implementation of digital masterclasses integrated within the scope of WP5. Table 1 illustrates the key activities within each work package.

To support the successful execution of B-Trust's Theory of change, the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework (detailed in the following section 2.1) provides a structured approach to measuring progress. It outlines the **means of verification** for key outputs, defines the **Key Performance Indicators** (KPIs) for each identified outcome, and identifies **target groups**. In addition, it specifies the relevant **data collection tools** to ensure comprehensive monitoring, enabling iterative learning and adjustment throughout the project. The MEL framework will allow the following:

- **Track key outputs and outcomes** linked to project activities to ensure alignment with impact areas identified in B-Trust's Theory of Change;
- Identify and **analyse gaps** between expected and achieved results;
- Develop and implement **mitigation measures for risks identified** in B-Trust's Theory of Change; and
- **Capture lessons learned** and pinpoint areas for improvement for upcoming activities and for the design of future projects.

² These work packages were chosen because the primary or core project activities will be executed within them, and hence they will generate the most critical outputs and outcomes of the project.



Table 1 - Key Project Activities

Key Project Activities	
<p>WP2 - Co-creating for Impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Setting up and clustering of the co-creation trajectories in the different regions; ● Conducting qualitative co-creation sessions with consumers and other 5H actors most affected by the Biotech Co-Creation Cases to gather insightful knowledge about consumer acceptance; ● Conducting qualitative, regional co-design sessions with the 5H actors that are impacted by trust issues and barriers hindering the adoption of biotech solutions in their work domain; ● Validating trust-building measures, guidelines and narratives with consumers via an online tool, forming the basis for developing trust-building measures and further elaborating the Risk-Benefit Assessments.
<p>WP3 - Workshops and Training for Innovation Uptake and a Validated Co-creation Programme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Translating the co-creation results in a draft co-creation programme and its supporting general principles and actor-specific trust-building measures ● Conducting international mutual learning workshops ● Organising capacity building and engaging workshops to finetune the generic co-creation programme and the linked general principles and actor-specific trust-building measures
<p>WP5 - Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability, and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Developing the B-Trust forum and maintenance of the community; ● Implementing a series of digital master classes structured around the 6 Biotech Co-Creation Cases; ● Developing the endorsement scheme for the B-Trust principles and measures and the linked B-Trust Ambassadors; ● Preparing impact funding & financing scheme; ● Linking B-Trust with other projects, networks and fora.

2.1 Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Framework

The MEL framework below is structured across work packages, linking outputs and outcomes as identified in the ToC. It describes the **status of tasks** as of Month 12 (November 2024), indicating whether they have been completed, are ongoing, or are yet to begin. For the outputs, the framework specifies the **means of verification or data sources** that will be used to validate progress. For the outcomes, it defines **relevant indicators**, which serve as an initial reference for measuring them. As the project progresses and the scope of activities is further detailed, additional indicators may be added, and existing ones may be refined to align with the evolving objectives and priorities of B-Trust. Lastly, **key target groups** are also identified, along with the data collection tools that could be employed, ensuring that the framework supports effective tracking, targeted engagement, and iterative learning throughout the project's timeframe.



Table 2 - WP2 MEL Framework

WP2 - Co-creating for Impact									
Task	Status	No.	Outputs	Means of verification	No.	Outcomes	Target groups	Indicators	Data collection tool
T2.1 Set up and clustering of the co-creation trajectories in the different regions (M5-8)	Completed	1.	Number of place- and context-based co-creation trajectories linked to the selected Biotech Co-Creation Cases	D2.1 Outline of co-creation trajectories	1.	Generated knowledge and raised awareness among the B-TRUST consortium on the need for a tailored approach to biotech co-creation cases	Consortium members	% of consortium members reporting an increase in understanding of the tailored approach for biotech co-creation cases	Online survey
T2.2 Qualitative consumer co-creation sessions (M7-15)	Ongoing	1.	Number of Biotech Co-Creation Cases with extended Risk-Benefit Assessments	D1.4 Biotech Co-Creation Cases	1.	Increased awareness of and trust in biotechnological solutions among consumers and other affected/impactful 5H actors	Participants in co-creation sessions	% of participants reporting a positive change in perception towards biotechnology	Online survey
		2.	Number of consumers participating in the qualitative consumer co-creation sessions	Attendance list				% of participants reporting an increase in knowledge towards biotech solutions	
		3.	Number of qualitative co-creation sessions with consumers and other affected/impactful 5H actors	D2.2 Report consumer co-creation sessions				% of participants reporting an increase in knowledge of the risks and benefits of biotech solutions	



				2. Increased understanding of the perceived risks and benefits of biotech applications from consumers and other affected/impactful 5H actors	Consortium members	% of consortium members reporting an increased knowledge of the perceived risks and benefits of biotech applications from consumers and other 5H actors	Online survey & Focus Group Discussion (Learning touchpoint)
T2.3 Qualitative, regional co-creation sessions with the other actors of the 5H (M11-20)	Ongoing	1. Number of qualitative, regional co-design or co-creation sessions with the 5H actors that are impacted by trust issues and barriers hindering the adoption of biotech solutions in their work domain	D2.3 Report on co-creation sessions with the other 4H actors	1. Increased awareness of and trust in biotechnological solutions among affected/impactful 5H actors	Participants in co-design sessions	% of participants reporting a positive change in perception towards biotechnology	Online survey
		2. Number of 5H stakeholders validating the Risk-Benefit Assessments and co-designing the draft measures and principles during the qualitative, regional co-design with these actors	Attendance list			% of participants reporting an increase in knowledge towards biotech solutions	
		3. Development of draft measures and principles to be co-designed with the 5H actors that are impacted by trust issues and barriers	Documentation available			% of participants reporting an increase in knowledge of the risks and benefits of biotech solutions	
				2. Increased understanding of the perceived risks and benefits of biotech applications from		Participants in co-design sessions	% of participants by type reporting an increased knowledge of the perceived risks and benefits of biotech applications from consumers and other affected/impactful 5H actors



				consumers other affected/impactful 5H actors	Consortium members	% of consortium members who reported increased knowledge of the perceived risks and benefits of biotech applications from other affected/impactful 5H actors	Online survey & Focus Group Discussion (Learning touchpoint)	
				3. Increased understanding of the most effective trust-building measures, guidelines and narratives	Participants in co-design sessions	% of participants by type reporting an increased knowledge of the most effective trust-building narratives and measures	Online survey	
					Consortium members	% of consortium members who reported increased knowledge of the most effective trust-building narratives and measures	Online survey & Focus Group Discussion (Learning touchpoint)	
T2.4 Quantitative consumer validation and co-creation via online tool	Not started	1.	Number of consumers that validated the co-designed trust-building narratives and measures.	Number of responses received for the online survey	1. Increased understanding of the most effective trust-building narratives and measures	Consortium members	% of consortium members who reported increased knowledge of the most effective trust-building narratives and measures	Online survey & Focus Group Discussion (Learning touchpoint)



Table 3 - WP3 MEL Framework

WP3: Workshops and training for innovation uptake and a validated co-creation programme									
Task	Status	No.	Outputs	Means of verification	No.	Outcomes	Target groups	Indicators	Data collection tool
T3.1 Translation of co-creation results in a draft co-creation programme and its supporting general principles and actor-specific trust-building measures (M16-22)	Not Started	1.	Development of a draft co-creation programme and supporting principles and actor-specific trust-building measures	D3.1 Draft co-creation programme (+ principles and measures)	1.	Increased understanding of the most effective trust-building narratives and measures	Consortium members	% of consortium members who reported increased understanding or knowledge of the most effective trust-building narratives and measures	Online survey /Focus Group Discussion (Learning touchpoint)
					2.	Increased awareness of and trust in biotechnological solutions among consumers and other affected/impactful 5H actors	TBD	TBD	TBD
T3.2 International mutual learning workshops (M22-24)	Not started	1.	Number of workshops with international actors	D3.2 Report on international mutual learning workshops	1.	Enhanced understanding of the co-creation programme, its guiding principles, and trust-building measures among the B-TRUST consortium through further refinement and validation	Consortium members	% of consortium members who reported increased knowledge of the most effective trust-building narratives and measures	Online survey or Focus Group Discussion (Learning touchpoint)
		2.	Number of representative actors involved and consulted globally	Attendance list	2.	Increased knowledge exchange among regional and international actors impacted by trust issues and barriers	Participants in the mutual	% of participants by type who reported increased knowledge on the topics of the mutual learning workshops	Online survey



					hindering the adoption of biotech solutions in their work domain	learning workshops	% of participants by type finding the content of the workshop useful and relevant for their work domain	
					3. Increased understanding of the co-creation programme or co-creation approach for facilitating biotech applications	Participants in the mutual learning workshops	Conditions identified for acceptance of trust-building measures among different 5H actors	Online Survey or interview
							% of participants by type who reported increased understanding or knowledge of the co-creation programme or co-creation approach	
T3.3 Organising capacity building and engaging workshops to finetune the generic co-creation programme and the linked general principles and actor-specific trust-building measures (M22-30)	Not started	1.	Number of capacity-building and engaging workshops offered	Documentation available	1. Enhanced understanding of the co-creation programme, its guiding principles, and trust-building measures through further refinement and validation	Consortium members	% of consortium members who reported increased knowledge of the most effective trust-building narratives and measures	Online survey or Focus Group Discussion (Learning touchpoint)
		2.	Number of attendees registered in the capacity building workshops	Attendance list	2. Increased knowledge exchange among regional and international actors impacted by trust issues and barriers	Participants in the capacity-building workshops	% of participants by type who reported increased knowledge on the topics of the mutual learning workshops	Online survey
		3.	Development of final co-creation program and linked principles and trust-building measures	D3.3 Final generic co-creation programme (+ principles and measures)	hindering the adoption of biotech solutions in their work domain		% of participants by type finding the content of the workshop useful and relevant for their work domain	
						3. Increased understanding of the co-creation programme or co-creation approach for	Participants in the capacity-	Conditions identified for acceptance of trust-building measures among different 5H actors



			facilitating biotech applications	building workshops	% of participants by type who reported increased understanding or knowledge of the co-creation programme or co-creation approach	
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Table 4 - WP5 MEL Framework

WP5: Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum									
Task	Status	No.	Outputs	Means of verification	No.	Outcomes	Target groups	Indicators	Data collection tool
T4.2 Development of the B-Trust forum and maintenance of the community (M3-30)	Ongoing	1.	Number of registrants on the B-TRUST forum	Forum analytics	1.	Increased dissemination of the B-Trust results and outcomes among the 5H actors.	Registrants on forum	Number of active forum members by type	Forum analytics and Online survey
					Diversity (5H actors) of members				
T4.3 Series of digital master classes structured around the 4 Biotech Co-Creation Cases (M7-22)	Ongoing	1.	Number of digital master classes	Recordings available	2	Increased dissemination of the B-Trust results and outcomes among the 5H actors.	Participants of masterclass	% of participants by type who found the content of digital masterclasses useful and relevant for their work domain	Online survey
		2.	Number of registrants and participants/attendees in the digital master classes	Attendance list				% of participants by type who reported increased awareness of the topics of masterclasses	
		3.	Number of views of the recordings of the digital master classes	Platform analytics				Average satisfaction score from workshop participants on the masterclass	



T5.1 Endorsement scheme for the B-TRUST principles and measures, and the linked B-TRUST Ambassadors (M21-30)	Not started	1.	Number of B-Trust Ambassadors	List available	1.	Increased trust, mutual understanding and collaboration among the involved 5H actors related to biotech solutions	Participants of exchange workshop/ Forum or B-TRUST Ambassadors	Qualitative feedback from 5H actors on the effectiveness of B-TRUST principles and measures and its application	Interview or Online survey
		2.	Number of organisations or 5H actors that endorse the B-TRUST principles and trust-building measures	List available	2.	Increased uptake of the co-creation programme or co-creation approach for facilitating biotech application among companies from bio-based & agri-food sectors, public authorities & policymakers, biotech researchers & experts	Participants of exchange workshop/ Forum or B-TRUST Ambassadors	Number of organisations or actors that are willing to adopt the co-creation programme or co-creation approach for facilitating biotech application	Online survey
		3.	Number of attendees in the exchange workshop with the B-TRUST Ambassadors	Attendance list					
T5.2 Development of Feasibility assessment impact funding & financing scheme (M22-30)	Not started	1.	Development of Feasibility assessment impact funding & financing scheme	D5.2 Report on assessment of impact funding and financing scheme	1.	Increased trust, mutual understanding and collaboration among the involved 5H actors related to biotech solutions	TBD	TBD	TBD
					2.	Increased uptake of the co-creation programme or co-creation approach for facilitating biotech application	Participants of the B-Trust forum	Qualitative feedback from 5H actors on the effectiveness of B-TRUST principles and measures and their application	Online survey



T5.3 Link with other projects, networks and fora (M13-30)	Not started	1.	Number of other networks or projects reached/contacted	D5.3 Report on links and collaborations with projects, networks and fora	1	Increased connections of the B-TRUST consortium with existing regional or European networks and actors in the field	External projects, networks, or actors	New connections or collaborations established with existing regional or European networks and actors in the field	Interview with task leader
		2.	Number of MoUs with related projects and actions as well as existing physical and online fora	Documentation available				Joint activities delivered with other actors, networks or projects	



2.2 Monitoring, Learning & Evaluation Protocol

The protocol provides a **structured approach to operationalising** the B-Trust project's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework, ensuring that all activities are continuously assessed, improved, and aligned with the project's overall objectives. The different steps of the protocol are as follows:

1. Pre-Activity planning

Before each activity starts, LAMA collaborates with the responsible activity partners to define the scope of the evaluation. This step includes in-depth discussions to clarify which aspects of the activity will be monitored and evaluated in alignment with the MEL framework. Additionally, these discussions **help identify any additional outcomes or outputs** that need to be measured. Together, LAMA and the activity partners **determine the required data type** (quantitative or qualitative) and **validate the data collection methods**, such as surveys, interviews, or observations.

2. Designing and implementing data collection tools

Based on the pre-activity planning, LAMA **designs customised data collection tools** to align with each activity's specific objectives. These tools may vary depending on the tasks' nature and the required data type. The responsible partners assist in translating the tool if needed and implementing these tools, ensuring smooth data collection throughout the activity's execution.

3. Data analysis and reporting

Once the data is collected, LAMA conducts a thorough analysis to extract insights and outcomes. The analysis process focuses on comparing the data against the project's initial objectives to gauge progress. The results of the analysis are then compiled into detailed MEL reports, providing a comprehensive overview of key achievements, challenges, and gaps identified during the reporting period.

4. Learning and reflection

Regular touchpoints are scheduled between LAMA and the project partners as part of the learning framework. Specifically, touchpoints will start in M10, M17 and M26, focusing on the project's status in relation to the MEL framework. These reflective sessions are opportunities for the partners to discuss the progress and status of risks and mitigation measures, address challenges, and share key insights or lessons learned from the activities. The collective feedback gathered during these discussions is critical for refining ongoing activities. Insights from these sessions are carefully documented and incorporated into the MEL reports to ensure continuous learning and improvement.



5. Adjustments to the ToC

Based on the insights from the MEL process, necessary adjustments to the project's ToC may be made. These adjustments could include addressing emerging challenges, updating or adding new outcomes, mitigation measures for the identified risks or reflecting changes in the pathways to impact or the intervention logic based on the deviations. Contributions from the advisory board members are also factored into the ToC adjustments, providing expert guidance to refine and strengthen the project's impact strategy.

2.3 Data Collection Activities

The following research tools were implemented to collect qualitative and quantitative data during the reporting period.

Table 5 - Research tools for MEL assessment

Tool	Type of respondents	Timing
Online survey	Participants of the first consumer co-creation session on 'Cell Factories' in Belgium.	July 09, 2024
Online survey	Participants of the first Masterclass , 'Co-Creating Biotech Trust in Agri-Food and Bio-based Industries'.	October 08, 2024
Focus group discussion	First learning touchpoint among the consortium members to capture qualitative insights on the project's progress (achievements and challenges) and identify risks and associated mitigation measures for the upcoming project activities.	October 09, 2024
Online survey	A short survey was conducted with the consortium members to assess knowledge improvement on certain topics.	October 11, 2024
Online survey	Participants of the second consumer co-creation session on 'Cell Factories' in Denmark.	October 29, 2024



3. RESULTS

This section is divided into two parts. The **first part presents the monitoring and evaluation results** of key activities implemented across WP2, "Co-creating for Impact," and WP5, "Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability, and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum," which are currently active. WP3, "Workshops and Training for Innovation Uptake and a Validated Co-creation Programme," has not yet started, and its results will be included in the following MEL report.

The **second part discusses the main learning outcomes** regarding achievements and challenges encountered, what worked well and didn't work well and why. As an update to B-Trust's Theory of Change, it examines the **status of risks, preconditions, and assumptions**. Moreover, mitigation strategies have been defined for the risks identified across the work packages. Lastly, it highlights **emerging lessons or areas for improvement** for the upcoming project activities.

3.1 M&E results across WPs

3.1.1 WP2: Co-creating for Impact

For the work package, during the considered period, **setting up and clustering the co-creation trajectories** in the different regions was completed, and **two co-creation sessions with the consumers were conducted in Belgium and Denmark**. The consumer co-creation sessions explored current food production methods and the challenges they present. Participants were presented with the potential of biotechnology and cell factories (food ingredients or additives obtained through precision fermentation³) as innovative alternatives, examining how these approaches could address certain limitations of traditional food production. They also shared their perceptions of the risks, benefits, and concerns surrounding these technologies. Lastly, participants were presented with a comprehensive assessment of evidence-based risks and benefits associated with cell factories, outlining the socio-economic, environmental, health and safety, technical and scientific implications.

Outputs

Table 6 - Main outputs of WP2

Output	No.
Number of place- and context-based co-creation trajectories linked to the selected Biotech Co-Creation Cases (planned)	6
Number of Biotech Co-Creation Cases with extended Risk-Benefit Assessments	6

³ Precision fermentation combines microbial biotechnology with traditional fermentation methods to produce specific organic molecules at an industrial scale. Examples of food components derived from precision fermentation include proteins for dairy and meat substitutes, lipids, specialty molecules, and additives such as sweeteners, flavourings, and colourings.



Number of qualitative co-creation sessions with consumers	2 in total (one in Belgium & one in Denmark)
Number of consumers participating in the qualitative consumer co-creation sessions	31 in total (Belgium - 16 & Denmark - 15)
Gender composition of participants in consumer co-creation sessions	<p>1st co-creation session in Belgium</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 5 men ● 11 women <p>2nd co-creation session in Denmark</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 8 men ● 7 women

- **Six biotech cases** were selected from a long list of potential options. These cases were chosen to **ensure a diverse range of critical parameters and perspectives**, allowing for a broad variety of cases. **Six Risk-benefit assessments (RBAs)** for the selected biotech cases have been completed. Among the selected biotech cases, one focusing on Cell Factories has been implemented through co-creation sessions in Belgium and Denmark.
- The profiles of the **participants in both the consumer co-creation sessions were quite diverse**: a mix of genders, a range of ages, and a balance of progressive and conservative perspectives. Both groups primarily consisted of individuals without a scientific background but with an interest in food production.

Outcomes

- **13 out of 16 participants responded to the evaluation survey** after the **1st co-creation session held in Belgium**. According to the responses received, the **session significantly enhanced participants' understanding of food production** (Figure 2). Out of the group, six participants felt they gained a thorough understanding of the effects of current food production methods on various aspects, while four gained some insight. Only two participants felt that their understanding was minimally enhanced, indicating that the session made food production issues accessible to most attendees. **Regarding biotechnology and cell factories**, five participants reported that the concepts were explained very clearly, allowing them to grasp how these technologies work fully (Figure 3). Another six felt they mostly understood the material, and two began to develop a foundational understanding. The responses show that the session generally successfully explained biotechnology and cell factories to diverse audiences. In terms of understanding the **potential applications and risks of Cell Factories**, six participants reported a strong grasp of both the opportunities and challenges presented by the technology (Figure 4). Five felt they had a reasonable understanding,

while two gained a basic awareness of potential risks and benefits. This shows that the session helped most participants develop a balanced view of Cell factories' potential. Most importantly, **the session also influenced participants' perceptions of biotechnology**, with three stating they were "completely impressed" and six saying they now viewed biotechnology more positively (Figure 5). Three participants felt their perspective remained unchanged, and only one expressed increased concern. Notably, no one became more sceptical about biotechnology. This suggests that the session generally cultivated a positive and informed view of biotechnology, addressing any initial apprehensions for most participants.

Figure 2 - Improved understanding of the impact of our current way of producing food (Co-creation session in Belgium)

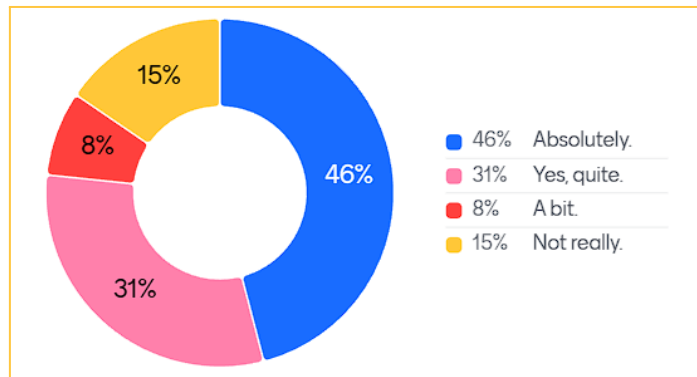
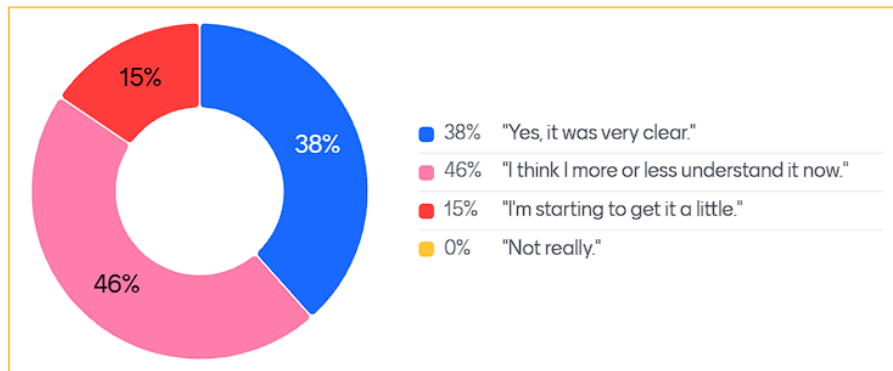
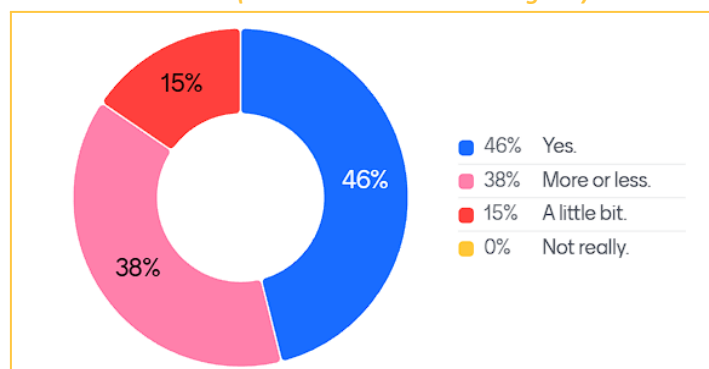


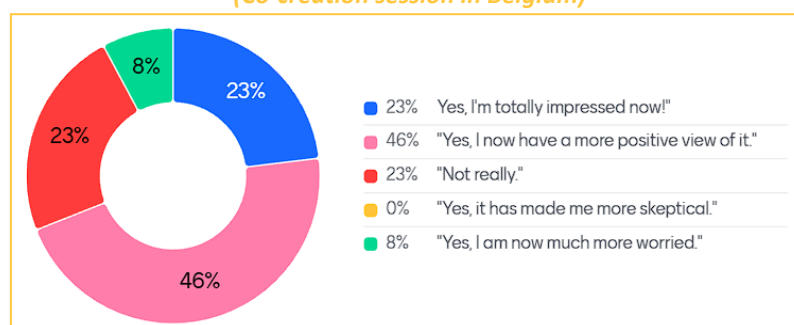
Figure 3 - Improved understanding of biotechnology and Cell Factories (Co-creation session in Belgium)



**Figure 4 - Improve understanding of the risks and benefits of Cell Factories
(Co-creation session in Belgium)**



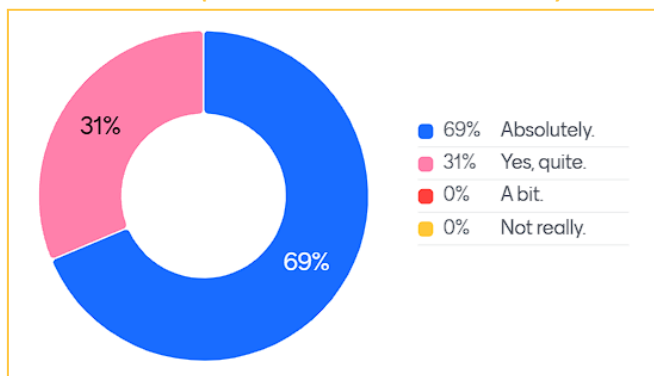
**Figure 5 - Change in perception of biotechnology
(Co-creation session in Belgium)**



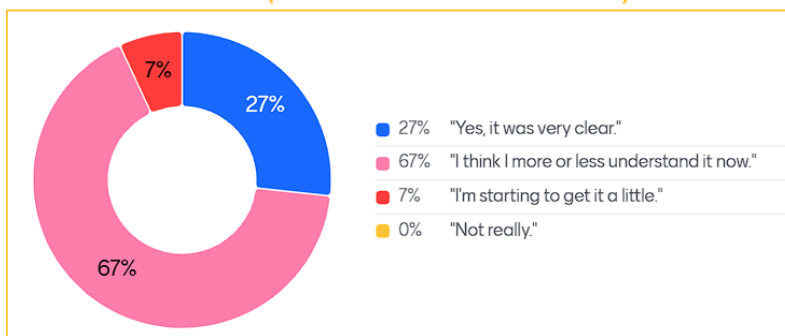
- 15 participants (all) responded to the evaluation survey after the 2nd co-creation session held in Denmark.** Ten participants felt they gained a strong understanding of the impact of current food production methods, with five feeling somewhat informed, indicating the session successfully clarified key issues (Figure 6). When it came to biotechnology and cell factories, four participants found the concepts very clear, while ten felt they mostly understood, and one began to grasp the basics. The session contributed to **improving the understanding of the concept of biotechnology** and cell factories among the diverse group of participants (Figure 7). **In terms of understanding the potential and risks of cell factories,** eleven participants felt well-informed, and four had a general grasp. The responses demonstrate that the session effectively communicated the risks and benefits associated with the Cell Factories (Figure 8). Finally, **the session also positively shifted perceptions of biotechnology** (Figure 9). Seven participants reported being “completely impressed,” five felt more positive, and only three felt their view remained unchanged, with no participants becoming more sceptical or concerned about biotechnology. Overall, the session fostered an informed and optimistic view of biotechnology among the participants.



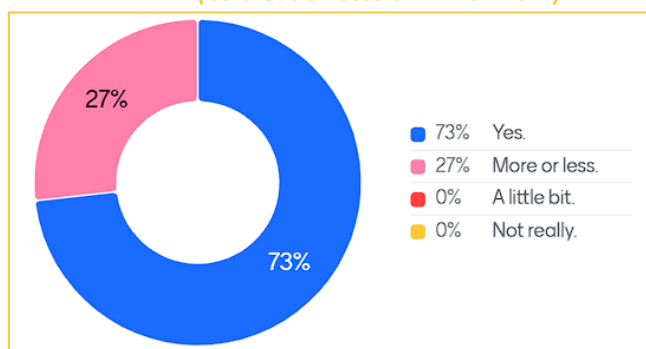
**Figure 6 - Improved understanding of the impact of our current way of producing food
(Co-creation session in Denmark)**



**Figure 7 - Improved understanding of biotechnology and Cell Factories
(Co-creation session in Denmark)**

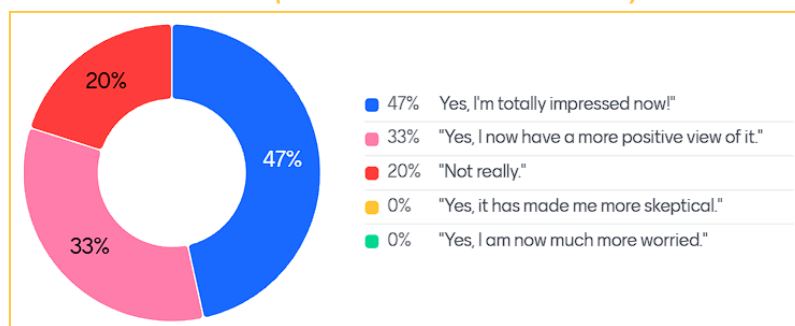


**Figure 8 - Improve understanding of the risks and benefits of Cell Factories
(Co-creation session in Denmark)**





**Figure 9 - Change in perception of biotechnology
(Co-creation session in Denmark)**



- Lastly, related to this WP, most consortium members have also reported an **increased awareness of a tailored approach** to biotech co-creation cases. Additionally, the majority have expressed a **deeper understanding of the perceived risks and benefits** associated with biotech applications, with particular emphasis on the case of cell factories.



3.1.2 WP5: Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability, and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum

During the reporting period, under this work package, the **B-Trust Forum** was developed and launched, and the **first masterclass**, titled "Co-Creating Biotech Trust in Agri-Food and Bio-Based Industries," was conducted alongside **communication and dissemination activities**. The masterclass emphasised the critical role of consumer acceptance in the adoption of innovative biotechnologies. It provided case examples from experts in academia (Aarhus University), a research institute (VIB), and a biotech company (Paleo), illustrating how stakeholder concerns are incorporated into research and development activities. The session introduced B-Trust’s co-creation methodology, developed and presented by Alice down the rabbit hole, designed to assess perceived risks and benefits among consumers and other stakeholders.

Outputs

Table 7 - Main outputs of WP5

Output	No. ⁴
Number of registrants on the B-Trust forum	48 (including the consortium members)
Number of digital master classes	1
Number of participants/attendees in the digital master classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27 in total (including consortium members) 18 external participants
Number of views of the recordings of the digital master classes	30
Number of visits on the B-Trust’s website	1304
Number of social media posts	60
Number of followers on LinkedIn	223
Number of views on social media	+13k views
Number of articles in journals and professional magazines	2
Number of connections with other projects	3

- The B-Trust forum has been successfully launched and currently has **48 registrants**.
- The first masterclass saw participation from **27 participants, including 18 external attendees** (excluding consortium members). Following the session, 10 external

⁴ The social media and Forum output figures are reported as of October 23, 2024.

participants completed the evaluation survey. In terms of **professional background**, among the participants who replied to the survey, most of the participants came from the bio-based and agri-food industry sectors (70%), with a few from academia (30%) and in terms of gender composition, they were all female.

- Regarding communication and dissemination efforts, the project has successfully launched and actively managed its website and social media channels, including YouTube, X, LinkedIn, and Facebook. These platforms have collectively enhanced outreach, with over **60 social media posts** published, **223 followers on LinkedIn**, and **more than 13,000 views** across posts, increasing the project's visibility.
- The B-Trust project has also started engaging with other projects and networks to foster collaboration, share insights, and enhance its visibility, such as the [GeneBECon](#) project, [Biotech4food](#), [DARWIN project](#), and linking with [EuropaBio](#) communication team on increasing biotech awareness with case studies.

Outcomes

- Regarding the first masterclass, **all the respondents found the content of the masterclass valuable**, with 6 considering it very useful and 2 finding it extremely useful (Figure 10). The masterclass helped most participants grasp the significance of consumer acceptance in biotech adoption, with 4 indicating a substantial increase in understanding and 3 reporting a moderate increase on the topic (Figure 11). Most participants indicated that **the session greatly increased their awareness of co-creation methodologies** for engaging stakeholders, while 2 felt somewhat more aware (Figure 12). **Participants were generally satisfied** with the masterclass, with 4 satisfied and 3 very satisfied (Figure 13).

Participants of the masterclass valued several aspects, including the emphasis on consumer importance, methodologies for social engagement, insights from industry presentations, successful case studies, and practical examples from biotech leaders. Specific appreciation was noted for examples from industry leaders, which helped bridge theory with practice. Based on the open feedback received, some participants requested more time for Q&A and better timing management for presentations to allow for deeper discussions. There was also interest in hearing perspectives from R&D counterparts within the industry to complement the presentations.

Overall, **participant engagement in the masterclass was low**; however, those who participated and responded to the survey offered valuable, **primarily positive feedback**, suggesting that the current approach and content were effective and well-received, though there is a clear need to enhance engagement in future masterclasses.



Figure 10 - Usefulness of the content of the masterclass for their work domain

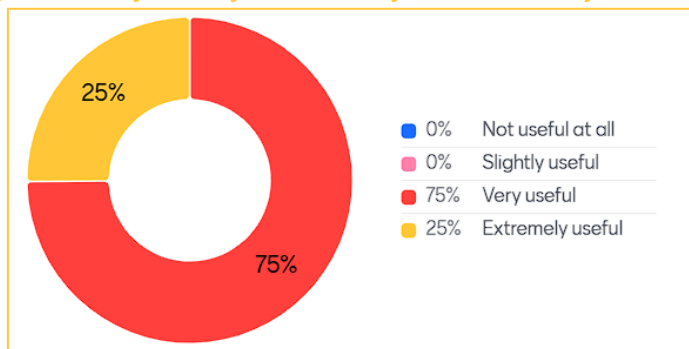


Figure 11 - Improved understanding of the importance of consumer acceptance in adopting agri-food and bio-based biotechnologies

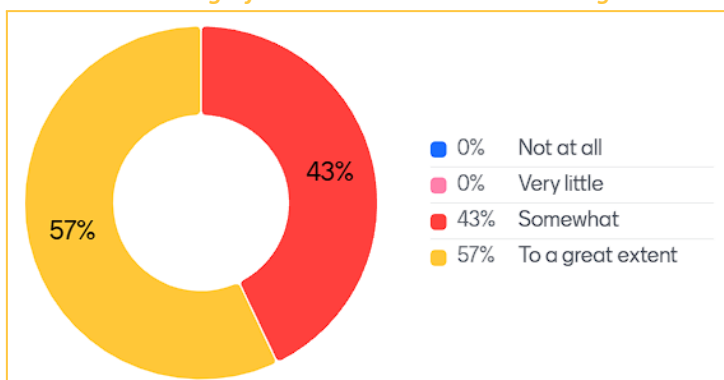


Figure 12 - Improved awareness of the co-creation methodology for engaging stakeholders

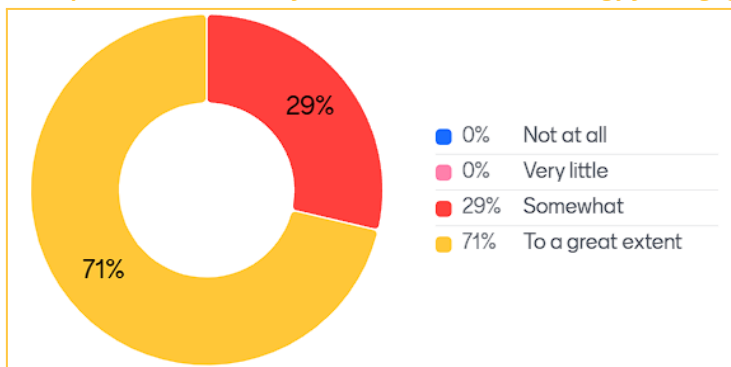
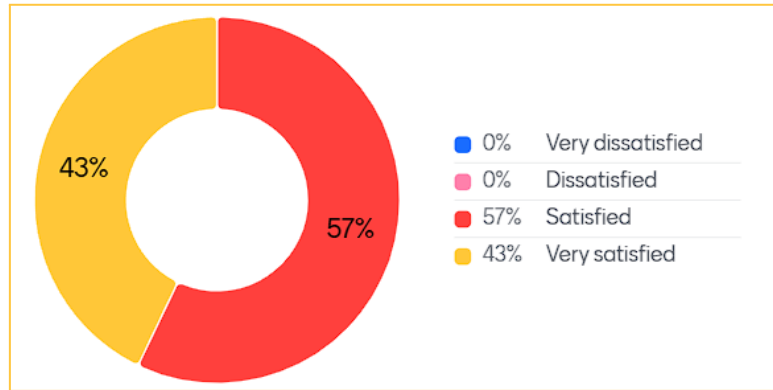




Figure 13 - Overall satisfaction



3.4 Overview of Learning Touchpoint

This section highlights **achievements, challenges, and emerging lessons or areas for improvement**, along with updates on the B-Trust's Theory of Change. The ToC update includes an assessment of the current status of key preconditions, assumptions, and risks associated with the activities undertaken. Additionally, mitigation measures have been added to the ToC, specifically addressing risks identified across the work packages to ensure more effective project implementation.

3.4.1 Key Achievements

Significant progress has been made during the initial phase of the B-Trust project. **Six biotech co-creation cases were selected** from a long list of cases, and **comprehensive Risk-Benefit Assessments** for these cases have been completed. **Two successful co-creation sessions with consumers were conducted** in Belgium and Denmark. Within the co-creation session in Belgium, facilitating a participant with polarising views on biotechnology presented challenges for the partner but ultimately did not impact the overall effectiveness of the session for other participants. Insights from the first session in Belgium were used to refine the session format in Denmark, enhancing participant engagement and feedback quality. Overall, these sessions have provided initial insights into how consumers perceive the risks and benefits of biotechnology. Preparations are made for co-creation sessions with consumers and other affected/impactful 5H actors (such as farmers and the biomaterial industry) in the five additional cases, supported by comprehensive stakeholder mapping for these biotech cases. The **iterative design thinking approach** has been critical in integrating participant feedback, ensuring future sessions are increasingly effective and responsive to diverse perspectives.

A structured methodology for stakeholder prioritisation and engagement is being developed, providing a clear framework for identifying and involving key individuals and groups across the upcoming project activities. Regarding communication efforts, the [project website](#) is **operational** and serves as a central hub for information. A **cohesive visual identity for the project has been established**, including infographics and templates, ensuring consistent and regular communication across social media channels, which is contributing to increasing project visibility.

The **B-Trust Forum has been launched** as a collaborative platform for information sharing and discussion, and the first masterclass on the topic of "Co-Creating Biotech Trust in Agri-Food and Bio-Based Industries" was delivered. The **masterclass contributed to knowledge building on the topic among the participants**, emphasising the critical role of consumer acceptance in biotech adoption.

Lastly, in terms of operational aspects, overall, **project coordination has been seamless**, fostering efficient communication and alignment among team members. The team has **developed a strong shared understanding of the project**, laying a solid foundation for future activities.



3.4.2 Challenges

Reaching the intended audience has posed some challenges for the initial project activities. For example, recruiting consumers for co-creation sessions has been a new and unfamiliar task for some partners. However, with the support of an external agency, the issue was resolved to ensure the engagement of diverse participants for the consumer co-creation session in Denmark. Moreover, the tight timelines for the first masterclass hindered effective promotion, resulting in low attendance. The short preparation period did not allow sufficient time to cultivate a strong and diverse participant base, affecting the event's reach.

Moreover, **engaging participants in the B-Trust Forum** has been challenging. Sustaining interest and building an active, collaborative community within the forum is critical for upcoming project activities and fostering productive discussions. However, regarding the project timeline, a concern is that the forum was launched prematurely, as only a few core activities have been delivered, and content needs to be published continuously to maintain momentum on the forum.

In terms of **operational capacities**, the project has faced some barriers. Some partners have encountered increased effort allocation for certain tasks, leading to increased workloads. For instance, the Risk-Benefit Assessments (RBAs) for selected biotechnology cases required significantly more time and effort than anticipated, as these assessments involved a comprehensive analysis of six diverse cases (an increase from the originally planned four cases). Developing engaging visual content to communicate project concepts has also been more demanding than expected, with resource limitations making it especially time-intensive. Moreover, changes in the consortium in the beginning, for example, VIB's departure as a WP leader, disrupted continuity, while changes in management or team structures within partner organisations created additional challenges in project execution.

3.4.3 Knowledge & Capacity Building

In terms of knowledge and capacity building, the following improvements have been reported by the consortium members:

- The consortium members have **enhanced their understanding of biotechnology** and its various applications, deepening their expertise in the field. Notably, partners have gained knowledge of the selected biotech cases and their associated Risk-Benefit Assessments (RBAs), strengthening their ability to assess the socio-economic, environmental, health and safety, and technical implications.
- **Training in co-creation**, led by Alice down the rabbit hole, has been instrumental in **equipping the team with the skills to design and facilitate stakeholder co-creation sessions**. These skills have proven invaluable for implementing effective regional co-creation activities that engage diverse participants. The consortium is improving its **stakeholder mapping capabilities**, enabling more targeted outreach and tailored engagement strategies.
- Consortium members have also reported that they **gained knowledge of the Theory of Change (ToC) and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)** frameworks, vital tools for planning and tracking project progress. Additionally, the consortium has acquired



essential **project coordination skills** through exposure to various tools and methodologies, such as the EU reporting platform and graphic design tools, which have expanded their project management competencies.

- Lastly, the **varied professional backgrounds** of consortium members have emerged as a significant strength. The exchange of ideas and experiences from different fields has contributed to a more well-rounded approach to project challenges, benefiting the B-Trust’s overall outcomes. The consortium has further explored the **role of social sciences within such projects**, recognising that **interdisciplinary approaches** are essential for addressing societal implications and public perception. Moreover, some partners have gained deeper insights into human behaviour or behavioural science, helping them better understand stakeholder motivations and engagement strategies.

3.4.4 Preconditions and Assumptions

The table below outlines the current status of key preconditions and assumptions relevant to the activities implemented in the project.

Table 8 - Status of Preconditions and Assumptions

WP	Preconditions and Assumptions	Status
WP2 - Co-creating for Impact	A key precondition for the project is ensuring that the partners who do not have prior experience facilitating such sessions effectively are well-trained and equipped to conduct regional co-creation sessions.	The precondition has been fulfilled . Alice down the rabbit hole (expert in co-creation methodology) conducted targeted training session focused on equipping consortium members with the skills needed to design and facilitate regional co-creation sessions effectively. Detailed guidelines and practical tips for conducting co-creation sessions were developed and shared, providing partners with a clear framework. Moreover, Alice down the rabbit hole has maintained ongoing support, offering regular guidance to partners in structuring and refining their session designs and eventual analysis.
	A crucial precondition for this WP’s activities is the availability of a diverse group of consumers and other 5H actors affected by/having an impact on the biotech cases. This diversity	The implemented co-creation sessions followed selection criteria for recruiting consumers , ensuring a diverse participant pool in terms of age and gender and a balanced mix of progressive and



	<p>should span various demographics, such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, and cultural background. The consortium must have access to these diverse participants, who represent the general population and also include unbiased and critical voices. This access is essential for gathering authentic and varied consumer insights, which are critical for assessing the social impact or acceptance of biotechnological applications.</p>	<p>conservative viewpoints. For the Danish co-creation session, an external agency was engaged to guarantee the recruitment of participants with varied profiles. Regarding the participation of critical voices, partners underestimated the degree of polarisation around biotechnology, which complicated discussions and slightly disrupted the flow of the co-creation session in Belgium. Moreover, one-to-one interviews are planned with the critical voices to understand their concerns.</p>
<p>WP5 - Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability, and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum</p>	<p>Tailored communication & dissemination: An important precondition is to tailor the communication and dissemination activities to the specific needs and characteristics of the targeted groups or various 5H actors. This could help ensure the content is relevant and appealing, increasing the likelihood of effective engagement and participation on B-Trust’s social media channels, especially on the B-Trust forum.</p> <p>The success of the B-Trust forum is considered a vital precondition for expanding the project's network and linking B-Trust with other networks and forums. Its effectiveness is crucial for maintaining continuous engagement and momentum with relevant actors around the project activities.</p>	<p>Efforts are underway to develop a curated contact list to enhance targeted outreach in the upcoming activities. Moreover, a tailored communication strategy specific to each actor type is being developed to increase engagement and participation in upcoming activities.</p> <p>A recruitment and communication strategy to increase participation in the Forum is being developed.</p>

3.4.5 Risks

The table below outlines the status and corresponding mitigation measures associated with each risk identified in the B-Trust Theory of Change (ToC). The Status - (S) indicates whether a



risk has been fully or partially addressed, while the Mitigation Measures Foreseen - (M) highlights the proposed future actions from the consortium members to mitigate the identified risks effectively.

Table 9 - Status of the identified risks and mitigation measures

WP	Risks	Status (S) or Mitigation (M) Measures Foreseen
WP2 - Co-creating for Impact	Insufficient or non-diverse range of Biotech Co-Creation Cases: This risk points to a scenario where the Cases considered for conducting the co-creation sessions are not sufficiently varied, limiting the ability to effectively address a wide range of scenarios or needs of different 5H actors.	To mitigate this risk, six biotech cases were selected , rather than four, as initially outlined in the project document. This approach ensures a broader and more diverse range of cases, enhancing the project's ability to address varied perspectives and requirements across the biotech field. - (S)
	Limited access to 5H actors: There is a risk that partners may not have adequate access to the necessary stakeholders and citizens, which is crucial for gathering diverse inputs and insights.	An initial stakeholder mapping process has been carried out, creating a database of contacts and networks, thereby improving partners' access to the necessary 5H actors. - (S, M) Leverage personalised invitations to engage relevant stakeholders. - (S, M) Develop a curated contact list to enhance targeted outreach. - (S, M) A tailored communication strategy specific to each actor type is being developed to increase engagement and participation in upcoming project activities. - (M)
	Low participation: There is a risk of low involvement or engagement from citizens, consumers, or other 5H actors in co-creation sessions or for online validation of co-creation principles.	Each consumer session aims to have 15-16 participants, ensuring a good size group and a base of diverse perspectives for effective co-creation. If project partners lack access to a sufficiently diverse profile of participants, external agencies are engaged to assist in recruitment. - (S, M)



	<p>No compelling narratives: A significant strategic risk involves the possibility that no compelling narratives can be developed that resonate with consumers (and other affected/impactful 5H actors), especially if their perceptions are strongly emotionally driven and may not align with scientific evidence.</p>	<p>An iterative approach is being implemented to ensure that insights generated from each co-creation session are integrated into the design of subsequent sessions. This allows for continuous testing and refinement of narratives based on participant feedback, enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of the sessions. - (S, M) Monitor evaluation results closely and adjust session designs - (S, M)</p>
	<p>Biased or 'primed' consumer sessions: The integrity of co-creation sessions may be compromised if they are conducted with biased or 'primed' consumers (or other affected/impactful 5H actors) – consumers/actors influenced by prior experiences or exposure to specific information. This risk poses a challenge to obtaining unbiased and genuine consumer insights. Participants with strongly polarised views on biotechnology could dominate the discussions during the co-creation session, potentially hindering effective engagement and contributions from other participants.</p>	<p>One of the guidelines for conducting co-creation is to minimise unintentional priming during sessions, ensuring that facilitators present information in a neutral, unbiased way. - (S) Refine communication strategies to avoid priming participants by carefully wording the framing of the workshop, as it may influence the participants' mindset - (S, M) Conduct a brief pre-session screening of participants to understand prior exposure and experiences related to biotech topics. - (M) To conduct separate interviews or dedicated sessions with actors having polarising views on biotechnology to better understand their concerns, ensuring that these perspectives are fully explored without compromising the integrity of the consumer co-creation sessions.- (M)</p>
	<p>Potential distrust: A potential negative externality could be that the co-creation sessions may foster distrust among the consumers/actors regarding the selected Biotech Co-Creation Cases.</p>	<p>Based on the evaluation results from the first two co-creation sessions, the feedback has been quite positive, with only one participant expressing that they have become more worried about biotechnology after the session. -</p>



		<p>(S) To clearly communicate the purpose, process, and expected outcomes of the co-creation sessions to build trust among participants - (S, M) To avoid recruiting consumers or actors with polarising views on biotechnology that can dominate the discussion during the co-creation sessions. - (M)</p>
<p>WP3 - Workshops and Training for Innovation Uptake and a Validated Co-creation Programme</p>	<p>Limited reach and uptake within the broader ecosystem: Participation from diverse actors within the workshops could be limited. Moreover, there is a risk that the co-creation programme may not achieve significant acceptance within the intended community or ecosystem, for instance, due to a lack of perceived relevance or value among stakeholders or insufficient incentives for participation.</p>	<p>A tailored communication strategy specific to each actor type is being developed to increase engagement and participation in upcoming project activities. - (M)</p> <p>Gauge and understand the conditions for eventual acceptance among the 5H actors of the co-creation programme, understand their incentives, and capture their needs and motivations to adopt or uptake the program by gathering insights through surveys or interviews. - (M)</p>
	<p>Low engagement from different 5H actors: If critical 5H actors show low engagement, the programme risks missing essential insights and support that could enhance its relevance and applicability.</p>	<p>A tailored communication strategy specific to each actor type is being developed to increase engagement and participation in upcoming project activities. - (M)</p>
	<p>There is a risk that the translation of co-creation results in a draft co-creation programme and its supporting general principles and actor-specific trust-building measures may not resonate with the needs or expectations of different 5H actors.</p>	<p>Tasks (3.2 and 3.3) are in place within the WP to validate and refine these measures through workshops with international and EU-level actors. - (M)</p> <p>Gauge and understand the conditions for eventual acceptance among the 5H actors of the co-creation programme, understand their incentives, and</p>



		capture their needs and motivations to adopt or uptake the program by gathering insights through surveys or interviews. - (M)
WP5 - Exploitation, Long-term Sustainability, and Continuity of the B-Trust Forum	Limited engagement and participation: There is a risk that the B-Trust forum may experience low engagement and participation from its members, which could render it unsustainable in the medium to long term and limit its ability to influence and effect the desired change within its network.	A new recruitment and communication strategy to increase participation in the Forum is being developed. - (M) Provide relevant and engaging content on the forum to address the specific interests of various 5H actors. - (M) Regularly update the forum with new content and opportunities for member participation (e.g., polls, discussions, webinars) to sustain engagement. - (M)
	Limited reach: With regards to master classes , there could be limited reach and participation, which could result in subsequent low uptake of the co-creation programme within the broader ecosystem. The masterclass's content may not appeal to or involve a diverse group of participants.	A tailored communication strategy specific to each actor type is being developed to increase engagement and participation in upcoming project activities, especially with a focus on masterclasses - (M)
	Slow endorsement and adoption of principles: The co-creation programme and its underlying principles may face slow follow-through and low adoption by key actors, particularly those with a catalytic effect, such as public authorities, policymakers, and funding bodies. Their support is crucial for legitimising and propelling the programme forward. Moreover, there is a risk that there might be a general lack of interest by the actors in supporting the broad implementation of the results.	Gauge and understand the conditions for eventual acceptance among the 5H actors of the co-creation programme , understand their incentives, and capture their needs and motivations to adopt or uptake the program by gathering insights through surveys or interviews. - (M)



	<p>Lack of concrete connections: The success of the B-Trust forum also depends on its capacity to facilitate connections and networking opportunities among various stakeholders. A critical risk could be the potential failure to build connections or collaborations based on the project’s results, which could undermine the sustainability of the project outcomes in the long run.</p>	<p>Mapping of relevant projects, initiatives, and networks to build a comprehensive database of contacts. - (S, M)</p> <p>Organise joint activities, such as workshops, webinars, or co-hosted events, with other projects with similar objectives. These collaborative efforts will create a natural platform for stakeholders to connect, exchange ideas, and explore potential partnerships, fostering stronger networking within the community. - (M)</p> <p>Actively maintain and expand relationships with similar projects, initiatives, and networks by continuously identifying areas of common interest and potential synergy. Regular communication and updates will keep stakeholders engaged, strengthening connections and increasing the likelihood of sustainable, long-term collaboration based on project outcomes. - (S, M)</p>
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3.4.4 Emerging Lessons and Areas of Improvement

Setting up the co-creation session

Recruiting the right participants for consumer co-creation sessions is critical for ensuring productive and balanced discussions. Clear criteria or guidelines should be developed to avoid inviting individuals with polarising views on biotechnology while maintaining diversity within the group. Participants should be selected based on their openness to discussion and willingness to provide constructive opinions. Participants with polarising views on biotechnology may dominate discussions and lead them in unproductive or scientifically inaccurate directions. Moderators must be prepared to manage the participants with polarising views effectively, ensuring all perspectives are heard while maintaining a constructive focus.

The **content and communication materials for sessions should be thoughtfully designed** to avoid priming biases. For example, Alice down the rabbit hole highlights that biotechnology should be introduced early in the session using neutral language and framed as one of several



possible solutions to the challenges in food production. Exercises and presentations should also use neutral wording to avoid creating the impression that biotechnology is the primary or only solution. **Neutral and transparent communication** could help maintain trust and encourage open, unbiased discussions.

Targeted communication & outreach strategy

A **well-timed and targeted communication strategy** is essential for promoting project activities, such as masterclasses. Late promotional efforts contributed to low participation in the first masterclass, emphasising the need for earlier and more effective outreach. Consortium members recognise that efforts are needed to **increase participant interest and interaction also on the B-Trust Forum**. Establishing connections with external projects, networks, and initiatives should be prioritised in the coming months to enhance knowledge sharing, build synergies, and support common objectives, such as improving participation in future project activities. This approach could also help improve access to diverse 5H actors and expand the reach of project activities. Furthermore, **developing curated contact lists and tailored outreach strategies** is essential for increasing engagement and mitigating the risks of low participation in upcoming project activities.

Adopting a 5H actor approach

The project transitioned **from a 4H to a 5H⁵ actor approach** for fostering effective stakeholder engagement and comprehensive knowledge building, especially for co-creation sessions. The inclusion of environmental representatives (organisations, lobby groups, etc.) as the fifth H broadens the framework to encompass not only **those who are affected but also those who have an impact from trust issues and barriers to biotechnology adoption**. This approach ensures that diverse and critical perspectives, including those of **consumers, academia, farmers, policymakers, and environmental organisations**, are integrated into the co-creation process, enhancing inclusivity and addressing the complex challenges of biotechnology adoption. Moreover, it is vital to gauge and **understand the conditions** for engaging different actors in co-creation trajectories and their **eventual acceptance of the co-creation program**. This involves identifying the specific **needs and motivations for different 5H actors to adopt the co-creation program**, as well as understanding its potential uptake and application within the broader ecosystem.

Operational aspects

The consortium has successfully **harnessed the diverse expertise of its members**, ensuring smooth coordination and a shared alignment on project objectives. This collaborative effort has been further strengthened by the **development of skills and knowledge** among members in areas such as assessing the risks and benefits of biotechnology and enhancing facilitation skills for co-creation sessions, among others. However, some task leaders have reported **resource or capacity constraints** in areas such as general management, Risk-Benefit Assessments, co-creation session preparations, and visual and communication materials development. To

⁵ Within the context of the B-TRUST, the 5H actors refer to Industry - companies from bio-based and agri-food sectors; Public authorities and policymakers; Academia - biotech researchers and experts; Citizens, consumers or civil society organisations; and Representatives of the environment

address these challenges, **regular discussions among consortium members could be initiated to identify and resolve operational constraints** more effectively. Encouraging **collaborative problem-solving and delegating greater ownership to work package (WP) leaders** could empower more responsibility for the respective areas. This approach could enhance individual task accountability and improve overall project management and execution, ensuring the consortium continues to achieve its objectives efficiently.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The activities implemented during the first MEL reporting period have established a strong foundation for achieving the B-Trust project's long-term goals. These initial efforts have successfully laid the groundwork for co-creation and stakeholder engagement, as well as for developing trust-building measures, ensuring alignment with the project's overarching objectives. As the project progresses, monitoring and evaluation activities will intensify, supporting the implementation of many core activities planned for the coming period. The second MEL report, scheduled for delivery in M22 (September 2025), will serve as a critical milestone in the project timeline, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the project's progress and outcomes at the crucial point of the project.

In **updating B-Trust's ToC, mitigation measures have been incorporated** to address risks identified across the various work packages, along with updates on the status of key preconditions and assumptions. Furthermore, **no significant deviations from the envisioned activities** have been observed, and as a result, no major changes to the intervention logic within the ToC are currently necessary, especially in redefining the pathways of impact or the stated outcomes or outputs.

Lastly, regular feedback will be gathered from consortium members through **learning touchpoints** to ensure the effective implementation of activities and the identified risk mitigation measures. This iterative approach will enable the project to adapt, address challenges proactively, and maintain momentum toward achieving its desired impact, as stated in B-Trust's ToC.



DEVIATIONS

At the moment, there are no task-based deviations.