

### **Biodynamic Consultants' meeting in Prague**

*December 8-10, 2023*



On the second weekend of December 2023 biodynamic experts from different European countries met in Prague, Czech Republic for a three-day conference. The event was

organised by Wandeschule, a leading international school for biodynamic consulting and agriculture. The technical part of the meeting was provided by the local Demeter branch (Demeter Czech & Slovakia).

Members of Wandeschule - Eva Gehr, Reto Ingold and Hans Supenkämper took the time to come and share their knowledge and their views on the current situation and the future of the biodynamic movement. Delegates from 12 countries were present – Czech Republic, Slovenia, Finland, Poland, Greece, Estonia, Denmark, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, and Ukraine.

We have learned about the past, the current situation and future challenges in every country and even further realised how diverse and complex the biodynamic movement in Europe is. Some of the participating countries do have a long biodynamic tradition, history, and well-established associations, some have biodynamic farmers without any joint organisation. Some have many small farms, others, like the Czech Republic and Poland, thousand-hectare farms. Not all the associations are members of the BFDI, some of them only partially cooperate with the Federation.

Options for funding also differ. In some countries the biodynamic work including education, advisory, even cost of preparations is fully funded by the government, such as in Croatia. Some of the countries receive government financial subsidies, as in Finland, Sweden, Denmark. Some are partially financing their activities with the help of the European Funds, in Czech Republic, Poland.

Another big topic where the situation differs dramatically is the certification process, cost of certification and application of Standards. Countries with a long history and established associations like Finland, Sweden and Norway have their own time-tested procedures and seemed to be reluctant to change. The cost of certification seems to be higher in countries certified by the ICO.

All the countries are experiencing a current drop in sales of organic and Demeter products, which goes hand in hand with a decrease in Demeter certified farms and lower income for the associations. We agreed that more effort and work is needed in the fields of education, advisory and marketing. In some participating countries, biodynamic agriculture is still seen as a hoax and the Demeter brand is not well known. A good communication channel, cooperation, and sincere and honest work would be the necessary essentials for a healthy future development.

A very special country with a potential to be a game changer is Ukraine. We were very happy to hear about growing interest in organic and biodynamic practices among Ukrainian farmers. Due to the ongoing conflict and lack of conventional inputs, local farmers are seeking alternative solutions. Moreover, large areas contaminated with heavy metals from the bombing could be treated with biodynamic preparations to remediate the soil. Especially, Fladen Preparete shows a good potential in this regard.

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