

lab of tomorrow Austria

How might the utilization of waste streams with high biogenic content be improved in the Western Balkans? To address this challenge, ICEP in collaboration with the Austrian Development Agency, the Austrian Research Promotion Agency and the Cleantech Cluster initiated the *lab of tomorrow Austria* at the beginning of 2021. A *lab of tomorrow* is an incubation program for new sustainable business in developing countries. To this end, the *lab of tomorrow* acts as a catalyst for the development of tailor-made, innovative business solutions for local SDG challenges over a period of 6 to 9 months, and facilitates profitable joint ventures or start-ups owned and driven by the *lab of tomorrow* participants. The *lab of tomorrow* was originally initiated by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation BMZ.

Improvement of the value chain of biogenic residue in the Western Balkans

While separate collection and recycling of biogenic waste has a long tradition in Austria and the value chain for these residues is well established the productive use of biogenic residues in the countries of the Western Balkans is not yet advanced. There are numerous challenges along the value chain, starting with waste collection and separation or productive use, for example for energy purposes. Improving the value chain for biogenic residues can open up new income opportunities for the local population or, for example, access to renewable energy sources and is therefore a lever for achieving the SDGs.

Key questions to be addressed

Questions leading up to focus areas for sub-challenges:

- What are the main challenges observed along the value chain for biogenic residue in Western Balkans?
- Where can unused potential for productive use of biogenic residue be identified?
- What are the main impediments to the productive use of biogenic residue?




Questions for each identified sub-challenge:

- Who are the main stakeholders?
- What sort of expertise will be needed?
- Who would benefit from a solution to this challenge?
- Who would be willing to pay for a solution?
- Which companies and entrepreneurs might be willing to create a solution to this challenge?

How the lab of tomorrow process works

- **Business case sourcing:** We identify unmet needs that can be transformed into business cases in development countries using the Design Thinking method. We interview those affected by challenges, topic experts and public sector actors.
- **Participant sourcing & matching:** We source local and European entrepreneurs and company reps and match them in international, interdisciplinary teams of 5.
- **Business Design coaching:** We facilitate an ideation sprint and a subsequent 4-month Business Design program to enable our participant teams to create new sustainable joint ventures or start-ups that tackle the identified business cases.
- **Partner network:** We help our participant teams gain access to follow-up programs, investors, mentoring & collaborators.

Target groups & value proposition

Entrepreneurs and Businesses	Users	Development Cooperation Partners	Local Governments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harness new revenue sources by accessing new markets or developing new products or services • Reduce risks associated with innovation, thanks to multi-stakeholder collaboration, coaching and other services to develop and validate their business solutions • Network with potential partners, including local and European companies, investors and local political actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the design of tailor-made business solutions that address their needs • Benefit from the resulting products or services, e.g. through economic, social or other SDG-related improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harness private sector innovation capabilities, capacity, finance and skills for the SDGs • Foster tailored innovations that effectively address local development challenges, rather than 'exporting' pre-defined solutions • Promote long-term SDG impact through sustainable business models, as opposed to short-term, project-based approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen cooperation with local and European companies • Attract foreign investment and drive innovation in their country • Use insights from private sector dialogue to reform the business enabling environment • Tackle country-specific SDG challenges based on innovative, tailored business solutions 