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European Circular Economy project kicks off in Wales

Written by: Editorial staff (/site/contact-form.aspx?)

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A new (/article-images/145308/Welsh%20bins2_popup.jpg) Europe-wide project intended to help smaller business enter the circular economy and operate in a more sustainable and profitable way has kicked off in Wales.



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A recent study by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) identified the potential economic benefits of a circular economy as being more than £2 billion, while a WRAP/Green Alliance study predicts up to 30,000 new jobs could be created.

The Circular Economy for SMEs (CESME) project has been established to support SMEs to enter the green economy and future-proof their business in a greener and more sustainable way. Supported by €1.73million of Interreg Europe funding and including 10 partners from six European countries, the project is intended to share experiences, identify best practice and provide a step-by-step guide for SMEs.

The project also aims to provide policy makers with the knowledge and understanding of the benefits of the circular economy and advise how support packages can be used to help SMEs to enter the circular economy.

Wales hosted the first partner event in May, which saw all 10 partners gather in Cardiff and hear from a number of circular economy experts including the Ecodesign Centre Wales and WRAP Cymru.

Delegates visited local SME Orangebox in Hengoed, winner of the 2002 Wales Environment Award. The company undertook a pilot project in 2014 to design an office chair that is 98% recyclable with the potential to generate sales of £5 million per annum and £2.5million of added value for Orangebox's supply chain.

Cabinet secretary for environment and rural affairs, Lesley Griffiths said: "Wales has a strengthening global reputation for green growth and we recognise the opportunities the circular economy will bring. Sharing valuable expertise will help us break down barriers for SMEs and bring this vision into reality."

The CESME project is expected to last four years with the first phase focussed on working with policy makers to shape and improve selected policy instruments and the second phase working with SMEs.

The CESME project was initiated by the Business Development Centre in North Denmark, who act as project lead. The project partnership includes overall 10 partners from six European countries: Denmark (DK), Italy (IT), Finland (FI), Bulgaria (BG), United Kingdom (UK) and Greece (GR).



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Other partners are Metropolitan City of Bologna (IT), ERVET SpA – Emilia Romagna Development Agency (IT), Regional Council of South Ostrobothnia (FI), JPYP Business Service (FI), Bulgarian Association of Municipal Environmental Experts (BG), Welsh Government (UK), Development Agency of Eastern Thessaloniki's Local Authorities (GR) and the Region of Central Macedonia (GR).

The project is reported to have a total budget of €1,730,000 and will be co-funded by Interreg Europe Programme. Its foreseen duration is four years.

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