

PRESS RELEASE

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Material flow analysis and social LCA should be further explored to put sustainability in the focus of regional policies

For the third time since the start of the project, partners of LCA4Regions gathered this week to reflect on how to improve environment and resource efficiency in the implementation of regional policies through the use of life cycle approach (LCA). Discussions and presentations of good practices focused on LCA for waste management and material flows brought on their path two essential tools with a high potential to reach the project's objectives: material flow analysis and social life cycle assessment.



Following a first Transnational Learning Journey (TLJ)¹ in Kaunas, Lithuania, and a second in Navarre, Spain, the Pyhäjärvi Institute virtually took the [LCA4Regions](#) project to Satakunta, Finland, on 20-21-22 October 2020. This time, the attention was given to the exchange of experience on LCA for waste management and material flows. This is a new milestone in the project's search of powerful tools that will help regions to increase sustainability in their policies.

After three intense days, project partners left digital Satakunta convinced that **for a greener future it will be crucial to understand how to incorporate life cycle tools findings in policy actions**. The 12th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) "Responsible consumption and production" is one of the challenges to be overcome, not only for Satakunta but also for other regions. There is a need for waste policies to take into account "upstream" opportunities for reducing waste generation at the source. Thus, **LCA studies should explore further this direction to enable a reflection on how to introduce the idea of demand-side management alongside recycling and improved handling of the waste finally produced**.

The TLJ proved that this is not a utopia: some examples are already proving successful and demonstrate that **comparative life cycle analysis can support decision making**. **Material flow analysis and social life cycle assessment** have been identified as **relevant tools with a high potential, yet not sufficiently deployed**. Regions have a key role to push for their use and support their implementation on their territories.

¹ Transnational Learning Journeys are at the core of LCA4Regions. Every six months a partner region hosts a TLJ which includes thematic workshops, site visits and peer reviews on one of the thematic pillars of the project. More: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/lca4regions/the-tljs/>

The LCA4Regions partners delved into the question from different angles thanks to three sessions: LCA for sustainable regional development – which included some thoughts on Finnish politics and LCA by Finnish MP Eeva Kalli; LCA good practices on waste management and material flows; case studies from Finland focused on waste management and nutrient recycling and peer review.

Among the good practices presented, several highlighted the positive impact made by the use of LCA on carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions which is indeed an important step in reaching SDG 12. Nonetheless, already existing initiatives – such as the biomass ATLAS and the nutrient calculator tool presented by the Natural Resources Institute Finland – show that **life cycle thinking has an even greater potential and can include more “circular material approach”**.

The journey ended on a peer-review session during which participants provided feedback on the environmental policies implemented in Satakunta and in Finland in general. All agreed that the country has launched an impressive set of policies laying down ambitious targets in several areas: climate change (mitigation and adaptation, decarbonization, carbon neutrality), circular economy. The way these strategies will be rolled out, harmonizing targets and finding synergies, will be a source of inspiration for the other regions. While reflecting on how to enrich the Finnish policies, partners pointed out that social life cycle analysis could be an efficient tool to put inclusiveness, resiliency, and local communities' development in the focus.

Following this new TLJ, the LCA4Regions partners have in their pocket additional practices that have a good potential for transferability and replication on their territories.

The recording of the whole TLJ as well as presentations made during each session are available [online](#).

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The LCA4Regions project - Improved Environment and Resource Efficiency through use of Life Cycle Instruments for implementation of regional policies of the European Union - aims at promoting life-cycle based approach in policy instruments through the introduction of the Life Cycle Assessment methodology.

Find out more information about the project on www.interregeurope.eu/lca4regions.

