

Learning Report PP3 about the 5th Interregional Partners Meeting of the SinCE-AFC project Letterkenny - Donegal County (Ireland), 3-4 November 2021

According to the Application Form: “*After the completion of the learning event, the LP will ask the PPs to complete a learning Report on the gained experience and a table with the overall knowledge gained during the 5 semesters with special reference to the good practices of the other partners that could have an impact on their regional policies.*”

Please think of our recent on-line meeting hosted by PP8. Please let us know shortly (no long texts needed) about what did you learn or what did you find interesting for your home region. If your stakeholders would like to express an opinion, then please combine their answers with yours.

Please be honest, we appreciate all comments and will use them also for reporting purposes.

A) What did you find most interesting from the international event with stakeholders and what can you take home from it?

The 5th project meeting and study visits were interesting because they allowed us to exchange information and experiences on the local Action Plans among project partners; in particular we could share our Action Plan presentations and get to know about the key topics and lines of action identified by partner regions for strengthening the circular economy in the SMEs. In particular, we appreciated a lot the possibility to attend the Project Meeting finally in presence, after two years of on-line meetings due to the Covid-19 emergency condition; we are deeply convinced that the exchange of information and learnings in a “face-to-face” way improves the interregional learning process and facilitates the knowledge of mutual contexts.

Regarding the GPs exchange, we were pleased to know that some of our good practices (Mercato Ritrovato, ICESP and Agrofood BIC) have gained the attention of some of our project partners from Hungary and Poland, which would get more insights for potential transfers into their action plans, through the organisation of the import workshops.

On our side we found very interesting above all the study visit to Cill Ulta - Centre for Sustainability, because of its concerning on an integrated approach of agri-food business, through the form of social enterprise; its mission and its sustainable development practices make it an emerging circular bio-economy hub for the local territory and community. We identified a set of actions related to training, awareness, information and communication, guidelines implemented by the initiative, under the four dimensions (sustainability, community, collaboration, vision) highlighted during the study visit, which we would like to deepen further; there are in fact many comparable aspects and therefore possibilities for mutual understanding and exchange. In the following paragraph we will better explain these aspects.

B) Which aspects did you learn for your region and your policy instrument from the:

1. Presentations and discussions of the Session related to the presentations of Action Plans and Study Visits?

Thanks to the study visit to “**The Cill Ulta**” some interesting lessons and elements were learnt.

In particular, among the wide variety of activities implemented by Cill Ulta, we were pleasantly surprised by the **trainings activities**, whose themes range from biodiversity, conservation, sustainable food production, food sovereignty and traditional craft, heritage and cottage industry; the workshops implementation is also supported by Donegal ETB, a local training organisation.

Among the activities, it also stands out “**Preab San Ur**”, the laboratory aimed at facilitating cross-generational knowledge transfer focussed on sustainable agriculture, biodiversity, tongue and heritage (for example through some plays, ie. Mindcraft).

The approach adopted and the kind of activities implemented could be a potential of learning or transfer for our Action Plan.

The commitment of Cill Ulta to the transition to 100% **compostable packaging materials**, and the stress on the difference between biodegradable and compostable, is also one of the Italian margins of improvement in the CE practices of local markets. Likewise, “*Curaiocht an Phobail (EIP-AGRI)*” - the promotion of a robust resilient economically viable agriculture industry in NW Donegal, which champions sustainable practices and complies with emerging climate environmental legislation - was interesting for us due to its policy commitment. These two mentioned activities could be taken as learning elements for the actions envisaged in our AP, in particular for the 2nd sub-activity: “Preparation of guidelines for circular economy conducts of farmers’ markets”.

The particular initiative “**Donegal Food Coast**”, facilitated by the Donegal Local Enterprise Office (LEO) to promote local food businesses and increase visibility and sustainable food tourism in the region, is a good example of private-public cooperation and a brilliant communication strategy; for these reasons we look forward to this initiative to draw inspiration for our action plan, in particular for what “Information and communication campaign” concerns.

In regard to the 1st study visit “**Envirogrind**”, we were very impressed by the huge and advanced system of waste composting, through the valorisation and re-use of any kind of waste through a licensed-recycle centre. It could be useful to adapt this approach to the Agri-food system of the Appenini Biodistrict and Local market system in terms of study and training activities.

We want now to underline some elements of the **Action Plan** presentation which took our attention, because they represent some points of contact with that of MCBO, from which drawing inspiration.

It was interesting to find that **PP5 (Hajdú-Bihar County Government)** developed an AP draft which is very similar to the Italian one, in particular the Action2, concerning the creation of Guidelines of circular

economy practices, aimed at Agri-food businesses.

The objective of raising knowledge, awareness and competences on CE issues seems to be a common commitment of all the PPs, and we think that it is particularly well represented by **PP2 (Region Central Macedonia)** and **PP6 (Donegal County Council)** Action Plans. It has been very useful hearing their presentations in order to take inspiration for the specific activity of our AP, focused on the training of CE experts.

For the same reason, we also appreciated the common commitment on fostering information and communication strategies on CE, which is our third key AP action, particularly promoted also by PP6 and **PP8 (South Muntenia Region)**, both on SMEs and civil society through dissemination of dedicated materials, articles promoting sustainable business models that work on circular economy, promoting regional and national initiatives/projects/actors/strategies and instruments to support circular economy, videos with best practices on the sustainable use of resources, etc.

2. Presentations and discussions of the Session related to the Donegal Country Region Policies

We could learn on the field about strengths (farming & seafood sector, seasonal food waste from hospitality, licensed recycling centers, emerging integrated rural bioeconomy hub) and challenges (knowledge and awareness gap, regulatory requirements, lack and reliability of data (waste measurement) and resource availability), that Donegal County Council has been facing.

We could appreciate similarities with our action plan as the focus on awareness and competency building training on CE key areas, the fostering ideation and opportunity identification by a stronger CE communication channel, but also differences; in particular we were very impressed about the ambitious endeavours for embedding CE within Donegal economic planning. Moreover, we have also appreciated the commitment on the integration of Circular Economy principles within public grants and call for tenders.

3. others?

C) Please provide us feedback on the project meeting and what we could improve for any other forthcoming meeting(s):

1. organisation of the meeting (e.g. timing, breaks, duration)

Yes, we think the delivery of the project meeting visit was very good and well organised. We could benefit from the in presence format allowing us to live a complete experience of knowledge of the realities that you want to deepen.

2. content (e.g. too basic/advanced, or too specific, too programme-driven)

The contents were adequate to the level of mutual knowledge between the partners and to the level of in-depth study of the subject achieved so far in the project.

3. methodology (e.g. balance of study visit, presentations vs. chances for contributing by yourselves)

As for the methodology was very good in terms of balance of study visits; time and space for presentations and interaction among partners was good during the Project Meeting sessions.

For what the study visits concern, we think that a little more time and spaces for questions & answers were needed.

Speakers of both study visits were very welcoming and competent.

4. information provided before the meeting

Information provided before the meeting were useful and sufficient to MCBO organisation of the trip, above all for what transport concerns.

5. others

D) Other things you would like to comment on (positive or negative)?

We would have appreciated the attendance of one project session in the headquarter of LEO - Donegal County Council, in order to see the Institutional spaces of the hosting partner.

E) Please share with the partners your aspect upon the overall learning experience gained, giving special prominence to the good practices that intrigued you foremost?

In general, we appreciated the study visits, that we found very interesting.
Anyway, we would have appreciated more examples of good practices focused on policy instruments.