



SinCE-AFC

Interreg Europe

5th **NEWSLETTER**

April 2021

You are reading the 5th SinCE-AFC Newsletter!

In this issue you will get an overview of what happened in the life of the project during the fourth semester.

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The main focus in the 5th semester of the project was on:

- 2nd stakeholders' consultation process
- interregional meeting with site visits
- organisation of local support group (LSG) meetings
- import workshop
- development of Action Plans

2nd STAKEHOLDERS' CONSULTATION PROCESS

During Semesters 2 and 3 of the SinCE-AFC project, Donegal County Council conducted a preliminary survey of the Stakeholders of all Project Partners to assess the level of awareness and knowledge of the theory and practice of the Circular Economy (CE) and CE policies/strategies. The dissemination of the results revealed that such knowledge varied greatly, even within partner regions. There appeared to be a lack of strong meaningful policies and measures to support the CE within most partner regions. The report prepared by Donegal County Council also revealed that whilst there is an understanding of the concept of CE, there was very limited knowledge or experiences of the practices involved in the CE. The lack of awareness and understanding within the partner regions pointed to the need for this fundamental challenge to be addressed at an early stage and to be an essential part of the partners' Action Plans. It also concluded that the project partners and public agencies need to have a much better knowledge of the real market opportunities within the CE and of the commercial models that can be applied to the sector. The report surmised that there was significant opportunity for projects such as SinCE-AFC to identify and raise awareness through Good Practices in the CE and use these as a means of creating awareness, improving understandings and affecting future policies.





The second consultation process was designed to assess the views and needs of Stakeholders within the project partner regions regarding the initial set-up, development and evaluation of the respective project partners' Action Plans. A questionnaire was developed by Donegal County Council and was distributed to the SinCE-AFC partners in May 2021. A deadline of 30th June 2021 was set for receipt of replies.

Conclusion of the 2nd consultation process:

The level of knowledge about the CE and CE policies/strategies has improved among Stakeholders as the SinCE-AFC project has progressed. When we initially surveyed the Stakeholders during Semester 3, 40-45% of the Respondents were unaware of the concept and policies relating to the CE.

It is clear that the main source of learning for the Stakeholders is the sharing of Case Studies/Good Practices which have been researched and shared by the project partners from the 7 partner regions during the Local Support Group meetings, Project Meetings and at online Import Workshops. The SinCE-AFC project has been a useful tool to raise awareness of the good practices in the CE and improve stakeholder understanding of the concept.

In relation to the preparation of Action Plans the survey identifies very clearly the key areas which the partners should include in their plans:

- a) Awareness raising and marketing of the circular economy,
- b) The development of strong local stakeholder engagement and the need for strategic alliances,
- c) The identification and use of case studies and good practices as a key tool to educate and inspire, and
- d) The development of a dedicated funding measure/stream to support the circular economy at local/regional level.

The partners in general have a positive perception of the potential of their actions plans to effect change – in particular at regional and local level:





- a) Over 70% believe they can affect change in policies at local or regional level with only 50% seeing a potential change at national level,
- b) The majority believe that the Action Plans will have the potential to enhance awareness of the circular economy at local level.
- c) The majority believe that the Action Plans will have the potential to enhance business opportunities at local level
- d) Almost 50% of the partner regions believe that the Action Plans will lead to an increase in the number of CE projects at local level.

In relation to the perceived challenges envisaged by the partner regions in implementing their Action Plans, the challenges mirror the areas of opportunity and can be summarized as:

- a) Gaining stakeholder and business engagement – this would point to the need to make the CE Action Plan relevant and practical at both local and regional level,
- b) The identification of business opportunities – this reflects the belief among partner regions that the active engagement of businesses is essential to the further development of the CE sector but that businesses may need to be “lead”,
- c) A lack of confidence/belief that the partners and their action plans will be able to effect significant policy change other than at local level i.e. what is required is strong national policies and measures to support the CE sector, and
- d) The difficulty of identifying or developing a dedicated funding stream to support the sector in their regions.

SinCE-AFC has an important role to play in developing and implementing policies, surrounding CE principals, and involving SMEs of the Agri-food chain. Clearly there is a large body of work to be done to raise awareness about the CE concept and its benefits to all. This project will, through its Good





Practice identification and shared learning, seek to promote much needed innovation, derive knowledge and develop collaboration.

There was broad agreement among the partner regions as to the key areas/themes that should be include in their respective Action Plans and there was an overall positive perspective of the potential of the Action Plans to effect change – particularly at local level. However the partner regions have concerns as to their ability to affect significant policy and funding changes relating to the CE, as this in the main, is the remit of regional and national governments.

5th INTERREGIONAL MEETING, 03-04.11.2021, Donegal Local Enterprise Office, Ireland

Donegal Local Enterprise Office hosted the 5th SinCE-AFC Project meeting and study visit, welcoming representatives from Greece, Italy, Hungary, Poland and Bulgaria to Donegal to learn about how businesses in the county are making the circular economy work for them. The study visits took place on Wednesday 3rd and Thursday 4th November. Over the course of the two days, the project partners and their stakeholders visited businesses around Donegal that have adapted sustainable solutions to running their businesses. On Wednesday, the group was welcomed by Michael Tunney, Head of Enterprise Donegal, before setting off to Pettigo on a site visit to EnviroGrind for a tour

of the facility, which offers long term sustainable solutions for the processing of organic waste material through its state of the art in-vessel composting process.





EnviroGrind processes organic waste material from sources such as gardens and parks, domestic and commercial catering, fish and shellfish.

The first day was closed with the afternoon session where the partners presented and discussed their Action Plans.

On day two of the trip, members visited Cill Ulta in Falcarragh, a social enterprise dedicated to reviving the economic and cultural resilience of its community by promoting ecological awareness, regenerative agriculture and horticulture, sustainable energies, and the development of the circular economy. Manager of Cill Ulta, Eithne Nic Lochlainn and Erin Gonseth, Horticulturist shared the story of Na Tithe Gloine and showed delegates around the glasshouse and tunnels.

The two days meeting were wrapped up at Castle Grove Country House Hotel with a discussion of the administrative tasks and future events.





LOCAL SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS (LSG)

Italy, 16.09.2021

Metropolitan City of Bologna (MCBO) held the LSG meeting online on 16.09.2021. After Marino Cavallo as host briefly introduced the thematic of the group and presented the scope of the session Silvia Marra from Last Minute Market introduced the activities of her social enterprise, since they did not participate in the working group the previous time. Laura Adreazzoli from Ambiente Italia presented the first results of the research on local markets and the Appennine Biodistrict carried out in the last three months. The goal was to provide MCBO with a technical advice in term of legal and economic analysis of the territorial context a collection of Italian good practices and suggestions on potential actions on circular economy to be applied in the territory of MCBO. The Circular economy action plan of March 2020 was the first legal/policy basis presented, together with the Italian strategy for the bioeconomy. After that, the view went deepen in the two areas of interest for the MCBO: Appennine Biodistrict and local markets. Italian good practices in agri-food circular economy, in order to map the Italian situation. More information about the proposed actions and discussion [here](#).

Romania, 16.11.2021

South Muntenia Regional Development Agency (SMRDA) organized the 5th LSG Meeting online. The event was attended by 13 representatives of national and local public authorities, business and research in the South Muntenia region, including: Giurgiu and Ialomița County Councils, Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Argeș Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, ICECHIM- Călărași branch, INMA Bucharest, Teleorman Agency for Environmental Protection. The participants were informed about the status of the SinCE-AFC project, the fifth meeting of project partners (event organized by the Donegal County in November 2021, the Import Workshop (organised by SMARDA on the 9th of September 2021) future actions within the project and good practices identified in the regions. Discussions related to the second draft of the Action Plan also took place. In addition, it was presented the results of the Covid-19 impact on the Agri-Food sector analysis in Romania – performed within to the Danube S3 Cluster project. The recommendations will be analysed with the possibility to include some of them in the 2nd version of the Action Plan.





Greece, 08.12.2021

The 5th LSG Meeting in Greece took place online on Wednesday 8th of December 2021. The meeting was organized by the Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia on behalf of the Region of Central Macedonia, in collaboration with ANATOLIKI SA and realized with the attendance of representatives of the Local Stakeholder Group. Ms. Chrysanthi Kiskini, Head of the Scientific and Technical Support and Project Implementation Department of the Regional Development Fund of Central Macedonia, made the opening speech by giving special honours to the participation of the members of the Local Stakeholder Group, and introducing to the project's objectives and the agenda of the meeting as well. The floor was given to Mr. Konstantinos Michailidis, Head of the Independent Directorate for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support, of the Region of Central Macedonia. He made his personal remark with respect to Circular Economy as a new priority axe of the Regional Operational Programme, and the extent in which SinCE-AFC project contributes to its fulfilment. The main issues discussed after were the regional Action Plan and good practices seen during the partners meeting in Ireland.

More information about the event [here](#).

Bulgaria, 28.01.2022

The 5th LSG Meeting in Devnya took place in person on Friday 28th of January 2022. The meeting was organized in the Plenary Hall of the Municipal Council – Devnya. At the meeting, the project team welcomed the representatives of the Local Stakeholder Group and presented the event agenda.

The second panel was dedicated to best practices and transferred the knowledge from the interregional meeting of SinCE-AFC project partners, which took place during 3-4 November 2021, hosted by Donegal County Council in Letterkeny, County Donegal, Republic of Ireland. A virtual study visit was presented to Envirogrind, Pettigo, Co & Cill Ulta, Falcarragh, Co. Donegal.

The meeting continued with a detailed presentation of the Action Plan and the concrete measures to stimulate, to implement a circular economy in SMEs in the agro-industry and food technology in Devnya Municipality.

LSG meeting ended with a panel discussion about the final version of the Action Plan. Stakeholders have actively engaged with concrete advice and proposals.





IMPORT WORKSHOP

The objective of an Import workshop is to identify good practices of circular economy in small and medium enterprises of the agri-food sector from other regions participating in the project, be inspired from them and then transfer the knowledge and apply them in the case of the workshop organising region.

Romania, 09.09.2021

On September 9th, 2021 South Muntenia Regional Development Agency (SMRDA), organized online, through the Zoom application, the Import Workshop.

The aim of the event was to present and debate good practices of the circular economy in small and medium enterprises in the agri-food sector, from the other regions participating in the project, and which have been selected by SMRDA as best examples and to transfer knowledge to the South Muntenia Region.

The Workshop was attended by representatives of SMRDA, partners of the project, ANATOLIKI SA from Greece, Donegal County Council from Ireland, Wielkopolska Region from Poland, and representatives of national and local public authorities, business and research from the level of the South Muntenia region, among which we mention those of the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forests, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Research and Development Institute for Electrical Engineering Bucharest (INC DIE ICPE-CA), ICECHIM- Călărași branch, the Giurgiu and Călărași County Councils, the Argeș Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture and Teleorman Agency for Environmental Protection.

During the workshop, the draft of the Action Plan of the South Muntenia region within the SinCE-AFC project was presented.

Further, good practices from the invited partner regions were presented and the presenters answered participants' questions about how the good practices work, providing detailed and useful information for planning the actions to be included in the Action Plan of South Muntenia Region.

More information about the workshop [here](#).





Ireland, 17.09.2021

Due to ongoing Covid19 restrictions in Ireland, this learning event took place online was open to all SinCE-AFC Project Partners, their stakeholders, all 31 Local Enterprise Offices in Ireland and SMEs who have an interest in the area of the circular economy.

The event was moderated by Mary Cronin, UpThink a CE and sustainability expert. Attendees were welcomed by John McLaughlin, Chief Executive of Donegal County Council. The opening address was given by the Irish Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine (DAFM), Charlie McConalogue TD.

The aim of this event was to present and dissect circular economy good practices in the agri-food sector, from Ireland and other SinCE-AFC partner regions.

At the outset, Patrick Barrett from the DAFM gave an overview of circular economy (CE) policy implementation in Ireland and discussed critical factors, drivers, challenges, and potential opportunities of the CE in our country. He also delved into the business case for the CE and the future of it.

Michael Tunney, PP6 Project Manager and Head of Enterprise, Local Enterprise Office, Donegal gave a comprehensive presentation regarding PP6's Action Plan and thereafter a discussion took place regarding the key actions, policy drivers and next steps.

Subsequently, Good Practices were presented in the following order:

1. Hexafly – Alternative protein production – Alvan Hunt, CEO & Co-Founder gave an overview of this innovative business as well as the challenges and opportunities of working in the CE.
2. Staramaki – Eco-friendly wheat straws – Stefanos Kamperis outlined details of this revolutionary social enterprise in Greece and discussed success criteria of working in the CE.
3. Frylite – repurposing of used cooking oils as biofuel – Sally O’Kane, outlined the Frylite sustainability story and how they have successfully transitioned from the linear to the CE over the years. She then discussed policy drivers, transitioning to the CE and the changing environment.

The event concluded with a panel discussion with all participants.





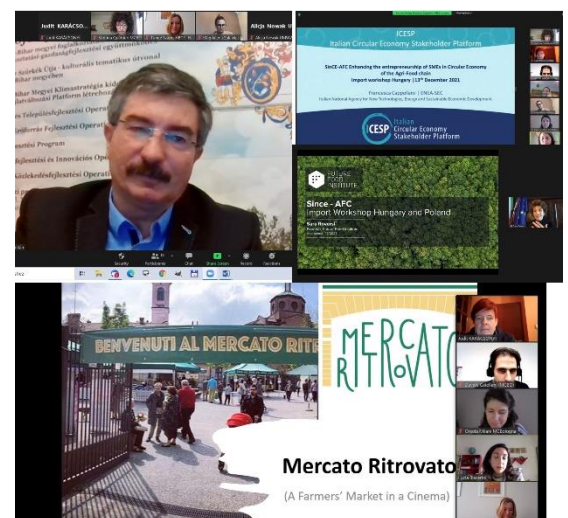
Hungary, 13.12.2021

Hajdú-Bihar County Government in collaboration with the Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Region, organized an import workshop for the SinCE-AFC project, which took place online on 13.12.2021.

The objective of the "Import workshop" was first to identify good practices of circular economy in small and medium enterprises of the agri-food sector from other regions participating in the project, be inspired from them and then transfer the knowledge and apply them in the case of Hajdú-Bihar County Government and Wielkopolska Region. In the import workshop participated representatives from Hajdú-Bihar County Government and the Marshal Office of the Wielkopolska Region, the Metropolitan City of Bologna and from Local Enterprise Office Donegal who are all project partners, as well as stakeholders from Hungary and Poland and of course the representatives of the Italian good practices presented during the workshop.

The workshop was opened by the president of the general assembly of Hajdú-Bihar County Government. This was followed by the presentation of the Italian good practices which were:

- Mercato Ritrovato
- Agrofood BIC
- Italian Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform
- Future Food Institute



Following the good practices the draft Action Plan of Hajdú-Bihar County Government and Wielkopolska Region were presented.

The workshop ended with an open discussion among all participants.





SinCE-AFC at other events

1. ECOMONDO 26.10.2021

Enhancing local Agriculture food chain to reduce ecological impact and climate change: The Metropolitan City of Bologna set out at Ecomondo 2021 its proposals for making the Local Farming and High Quality Products Direct Sales networks even more sustainable, resilient and attractive thanks to the SinCE-AFC project good practices

Among the most recent processes of recovery and innovation in the chain of production, distribution and consumption of agricultural products, the role of local markets is becoming increasingly relevant. This importance stems first and foremost from the profound innovation of local markets themselves, which is possible thanks to the new roles that they are gradually taking on in quality production and marketing, food education, socialization with local and rural communities, and the promotion and enhancement of agricultural skills. Thanks to "farm 2.0" the farm is being transformed in many territories. Not only that, but local markets are becoming factors of urban regeneration and revitalization, of interchange between different urban segments of the population living in neighborhoods, peripheral areas, and areas in the historic center of towns and cities. There is therefore an opportunity to promote and disseminate, even in the network of local and farmers' markets, forms of circular economy that focus on reusing packaging, recycling raw and secondary materials, eliminating waste and optimizing food logistics.

These are the issues that Mr. Marino Cavallo, Manager of the Metropolitan City of Bologna, presented on Monday 26 October in his paper "Enhancing local Agriculture food chain to reduce ecological impact and climate change" for the session "The European climate neutrality objectives: policies and investments for a competitive and sustainable agri-food supply chain", at the Ecomondo 2021 International Exhibition.

Dr. Maurizio Notarfonso, chairman of the session and Head of European Projects, Environment and Young Entrepreneurs Area of Federalimentare (The Italian food and beverages industry national federation), also presented the poster prepared by the Metropolitan City of Bologna to illustrate in a brief and effective way the identifying elements of the SinCE-AFC Project that aims to improve policies on regional innovation strategies, facilitating horizontal mechanisms that support and promote entrepreneurship of SMEs in the agri-food sector through the opportunities of the circular economy.





In the poster, the results of a survey on farmers' markets in the Metropolitan Area of Bologna were also described. On the basis of these studies, about 20 local markets were identified and, in particular, the Bolognese Farmer Market "Mercato Ritrovato" was identified as a good practice within the SinCE-AFC project.

The findings of these studies were that by creating a synergy between agricultural and agri-food companies in the metropolitan area, a wider range of consumers could be reached, increasing sales potential thanks to the business models of the circular economy.

Link to the agenda:

<https://www.ecomondo.com/link/seminari-e-convegni/e17700219/gli-obiettivi-europei-di-neutralita-climatica-politiche-e-investimenti-per-una-filiera-agroalimentare-competitiva-e-sostenibile.html>





2. Local Enterprise Week 05-08.03.2022

Donegal County Council organized the Local Enterprise Week between 5-8/03/2022. Within Local Enterprise Week a circular economy event was organized which had a specific food focus. This event provided an overview of the circular economy and circular business models.

Two experts who worked together with Local Enterprise Office in the development of their Action Plan within SinCE-AFC project talked about circular business models and innovation across the supply chain. They outlined case studies and discuss pain points and challenges during the CE transition. The event culminated with a discussion about where to start and how to embed CE thinking. The audience gained an insight into how to innovate and think differently across the supply chain.

DEMYSTIFYING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY: FOOD SECTOR FOCUS

SinCE-AFC
Interreg Europe

Date: 08/03/2022
Time: 14:00 - 15:30
Location: Online via Zoom
Book Now: Go to www.bit.ly/36ic3V8F

Overview
With a specific food focus, this event will provide an overview of the circular economy and circular business models. The audience will gain an insight into how to innovate and think differently across the supply chain. Case studies as well as typical pain-points and challenges during Circular Economy transition will be explored. The event will culminate with a discussion about where to start and how to embed Circular Economy thinking.

Keynote Speaker

Geraldine Boylan
Hubbert - Director - Environment
Geraldine has led over 50 circular economy business support/delivery projects over the last 5 years, working with organisations such as Zero Waste Scotland, the EU ECOM, Food for Manufacturing Research (2019) etc. In her professional life, she brings a breadth of experience in project and innovation work/delivery debates.

Alex Finloni
Hubbert - Environmental Consultant
Alex brings over 4 years' experience of Circular Economy project management and delivery in Scotland, Ireland and the UK. He has worked on food waste value-add projects for hospitality, retail and catering industries. His broad-based knowledge of development of operational models for circular products.

Difig Fiontar Ábúil
Local Enterprise Office

More information about the event: <https://www.localenterprise.ie/Donegal/Training-Events/LEW/>

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