

European Circular Economy project kicks off in Wales with the participation of the Region of Central Macedonia and ANATOLIKI Development Agency

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. Circular economy is a key concept of the Green Economy, where high-quality materials derived from waste products can be supplied back to Welsh manufacturers and productively used again and again. Supported by €1.63million of Interreg Europe funding and including 10 partners from six European countries, the project will share experiences, identify best practice and provide a step by step guide for SMEs to become included in the circular economy. The CESME project is expected to last for four years.



The project also aims to improve the impact and effectiveness of policy by providing policy makers with the knowledge and understanding of the benefits of the circular economy and advice on how policy and support packages can be used to help SMEs to enter the circular economy.

Wales hosted the first partner event in May, which saw all ten partners gather in Cardiff to identify good practice and hear from a number of Welsh circular economy experts including the Ecodesign

Centre Wales and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) Cymru. During the first partner event delegates visited local SME Orangebox, winner of the 2002 Wales Environment Award, to understand more about their sustainable operating practices. The company undertook a pilot project in 2014 to design an office chair and accompanying sales model optimised for a circular economy. The pilot study has shown that 98% of the chair is recyclable and when rolled out this 'Office Chair for Life' will have the potential to generate sales of £5million per annum and £2.5million of added value for Orangebox's supply chain.

The Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Rural Affairs, Lesley Griffiths commented on the project importance to help push the circular economy agenda forward, by sharing valuable expertise that will help break down barriers for SMEs and bring this vision into a reality.

The Region of Central Macedonia applies a bundle of policies and measures to strengthen competitiveness and employment. As owner of the Regional Operational Programme of Central Macedonia for 2014-2020 it seeks to make Central Macedonia a model region. Participation in innovative projects supported by the European Commission, has significant added value, as it allows better specification of activities and opens new pathways for the economy.

Notes

- The CESME project was initiated by the Business Development Centre in North Denmark, who act as project lead. The project partnership includes overall ten partners from six European countries: Denmark (DK), Italy (IT), Finland (FI), Bulgaria (BG), United Kingdom (UK) and Greece (GR).
- The project has a total budget of €1,630,000 and will be co-funded by Interreg Europe Programme (<http://www.interregeurope.eu>).