

Developing Pathways for the Circular Economy

EUROPEAN WEEK OF REGIONS AND CITIES EVENT OF THE 20/10/2020

Report

Introduction

The event ‘Developing pathways for the circular economy’ represented a novel and fruitful partnership showcasing the positive collaboration between three different projects operating in diverse field of the circular economy transition. Fortunately, the heterogeneous associates had the opportunity to get directly involved, by becoming ‘official partners’, in the 18th edition of the most important annual *kermess* for European territorial cohesion and cross-regional cooperation, namely the 2020 European Week of Regions and Cities <https://europa.eu/regions-and-cities/>

- **REPLACE** (*regional policy actions for circular economy*) InterregEurope project objective is to test and apply its replicable systemic framework for circular economy transition by enhancing the Regional Operational Programmes of the 8 participating regions www.interregeurope.eu/replace
- **CIRC-NSR** (*circular north sea regions*) Interreg North Sea Region project focuses on reinforcing circular economy by improving governance structures through the deployment of 8 pilot actions in the 5 regions involved in the Consortium to develop a ‘Circular Economy Knowledge centre’ that analyses other projects’ experiences with circular economy <https://northsearegion.eu/circ-nsr/partnership/>
- **DIGIPRIME** (*digital platform for circular economy in cross-sectorial sustainable value network*) is an Horizon 2020 project aiming at the development of a digital circular-economy-centred IT federated platform to support the transition toward circular business models, through data-enhanced recovery and reuse of functions and materials <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/873111/it>

The claim for a 90 minutes participative partner event advanced by the 3-project-partnership to the European Week of Regions and Cities, revolved around the role of the regional public authorities in the transition toward a circular economy through the bottom-up exchange of experiences, barriers and best practices among practitioners.

The original application, titled ‘Policy Laboratory on Circular Economy’, was approved and merged with a self-promotional event organized by the Climate KIC, namely the main European initiative on climate innovation. To meet the different stances arising from the integration of two very diverse proposals, the event was transformed into a more general discussion focusing on the transition toward a circular economy, accompanied by the presentation of six European projects (3 per each applicant) in a common plenary session; then, the arrangement of two separate rooms allowed each applicant the opportunity to debate more specific topics.

For the first time, due to the Corona virus pandemic and the resulting limitations, the 18th edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities was entirely delivered on-line: accordingly, *'Developing pathways for the circular economy'* was held remotely, via Zoom, on the 20th of October 2020 from 16.30 to 18.00 CET.

To encounter the various needs of all involved parties, *'Developing pathways for the circular economy'* was structured as follow:

- An initial plenary session:
 - 1st panel *'circular economy from a regional perspective'* with two speakers (one representing the application of REPLACE, CIRC-NSR and DIGIPRIME, and one for the Climate KIC) and a moderator;
 - 2nd panel *'introduction to the case studies'* round of short presentations of the six European projects participating (three projects per each applicant)
- 3rd panel with the creation of 2 separate *'break-out rooms'* (one for each applicant)
 - ROOM 1: REPLACE, CIRC-NSR and DIGIPRIME
 - ROOM 2: Climate KIC (LOOP Ports, Academy on Circular Economy and CICERONE)

The agenda

1st panel *'circular economy from a regional perspective'* (20-25 min)

Session moderated by Mr Cristian Matti (Climate KIC, Transition HUB manager) with contributions from Ms Eva Sørensen (CIRC-NSR, Prof Roskilde University) and Ms Cliona Howie (Head of Circular Economy EIT Climate KIC)

2nd panel *'introduction to the case studies'* (18 mins)

Objectives, activities and expected outcomes of the six projects:

- REPLACE - Isabel Süner (HWWI, head of International Cooperation)
- Circ-NSR - Mogens Michael Møller (Senior Consultant Sustainability Business Hub Fyn)
- H2020 DIGIPRIME - Marcello Colledani (Politecnico di Milano, professor)
- LOOP Ports - Maria Loloni (Climate KIC)
- Academy on Circular Economy - Annalisa Spalazzi (Climate KIC)
- CICERONE- Laura Nolan (Climate KIC)

3rd panel *'break-out rooms'* (40-50 min)

Room 1: REPLACE, DIGIPRIME, CIRC-NSR projects

Room 2: Climate KIC: LOOP Ports, Academy on Circular Economy and CICERONE

ROOM 1

Discussion moderated by Mr Sander Bos (Province of Fryslân, Circular Economy and European Affair Advisor) about two topics: Governance and the role of the Regions in the circular economy transition, with intervention of Mr Mogens Michael Møller (Senior Consultant Sustainability Business Hub Fyn) and presentation of two examples of regional efforts in the transition: City of Hamburg by Ms Stefanie Wodrig (City of Hamburg Senate Chancellery, European Policy Department) and Lodzkie Region by Mr Marcin Podgórski (Lodzkie Region, Head of Unit Regional Offices in Brussels and Chengdu).

The event

'Developing pathways for the circular economy' took place on the 20/10/2020 via Zoom, between 16.30 and 18.00 CET.

Mr Cristian Matti (*Climate KIC Transition HUB manager*), the moderator of the first panel discussion '*circular economy from a regional perspective*', opened the event by welcoming the participants and introducing the two speakers.

- Mrs Eva Sørensen (*CIRC-NSR project, Professor at Roskilde University*) characterized the important role of effective governance networks in enabling the transition toward a circular economy. She presented a governance network as a group of autonomous actors joining forces to reach common objectives through negotiation processes in which all peculiar expertise are exploited and combined. She outlined CIRC-NSR as a project aiming at investigating successful governance networks contributing positively to circular economy targets with focus on meta-governance, namely the leadership and facilitating roles within a governance network.
- Mrs Cliona Howie (*Climate KIC Head of Circular Economy*) highlighted how the various policy arenas are in need for innovations in order to achieve a low-carbon and circular economy transition. She introduced the key levers of circular economy change: policy redefinition from European to local scale, creation of network of actors addressing specific challenges, transformation of private financial sector, generation of scientific methods for stakeholder engagement and transformation of industrial value chains. In conclusion, she evidenced the necessity for a transversal and coordinated place-based approach to the transition, starting from resources-mapping efforts and ending with full political commitment.

Mrs Cristian Matti reflected on the interventions while posing a round of questions selected from the chat. Mrs Eva Sørensen answered to a point requesting how to avoid mistakes while supporting effective governance models: she delineated the generation of trust and community engagement as core elements for successful governance, while ineffective results could be linked to both under- and over- regulation in meta-governance mechanisms.

Mrs Cliona was asked about the role of leadership in the context of circular economy transition: she affirmed how circular economy was largely appealing and capable of benefitting the society as a whole, thus an integral and coordinated approach could ensure no one is left behind.

The second panel '*introduction to the case studies*' showcased the six circular-economy-themed projects participating to the event:

- **REPLACE** - Ms Isabel Süner (*Hamburg International Institute of Economics, Head of International Cooperation*) She explained the two different project phases: an intensive learning first period, followed by the implementation of policy actions and their monitoring in the second. She communicated REPLACE key objectives: harmonization of regional approaches for the transition toward a circular economy to overcome the current fragmentation, development of holistic strategical frameworks based on analysis, exploitation of cross-regional capabilities and launch of synergic funding instruments.
- **CIRC NSR** - project manager Mr Mogens Michael Møller (*Senior Consultant Sustainability Business Hub Fyn*). He opened by clarifying the difference between government and governance, evidencing how the latter represents the focus of CIRC-NSR, since governance could ensure the cooperation and

collaboration between various independent stakeholders in meeting overarching circular targets. He demonstrated CIRC-NSR strategy aiming at the generation of the 'Circular Economy Governance Transfer Centre' through the collection of knowledge not only within the 5 pilots launched in the participating regions but also by gathering external inputs from other initiatives. He concluded with an open invitation in taking part in the knowledge sharing and investigation efforts by sharing his contact details.

- **DIGIPRIME** - project manager Mr Marcello Colledani, (*Professor Politecnico di Milano, Research Associate STIIMA-CNR*). He outlined how the digital platform, developed by the 36 project partners, would solve the issues of information asymmetry in current and future circular value chains, not only by improving the transfer of information among stakeholders but also ameliorating the traceability of circular products and materials. He explained how the federated structure of the platform would benefit through its different nodes (regional or sectorial) both cross-sectorial and interregional circular business cases. He presented the 'technical' business cases that are used to test the platform: batteries, mechatronics and electronics, textile and composites techno-polymers, as well as the 'non-technical' ones focusing on the cross-regional approach for cooperation and on the circular innovation hubs.
- **LOOP Ports** – Ms Maria Loloni (*Climate KIC*). She unveiled the project's victory of the Global Award from the International Association of Ports and Harbours in 2020. She evidenced how the project supported the transition toward a circular economy in the harbour sector through the evaluation of potentials in terms of material flow and sharing possibilities, the identification of best practices and valuable business models, as well as the training and the creation of links among actors locally and at European level.
- **Academy on Circular Economy** – Ms Annalisa Spalazzi (*Climate KIC Regional Innovation Schemes*). She introduced the Serbia-based project goals of developing circular skills reflecting the West Balkan market needs, while generating awareness through circular economy campaigns. The project created tailored training models and policy regulations, as well as a circularity compass for SMEs.
- **CICERONE** - Ms Laura Nolan (*Climate KIC*). She presented CICERONE targets of aligning circular economy research and innovation programmes at all level (from European to local) by producing the new strategic research and innovation agenda for the circular economy, developed at a challenge-level-approach, as well as the delivery of a platform for the monitoring of circular actions.

For the last panel, two separate rooms were generated: each participant was free to decide where to go:

1. Room 1 - REPLACE, CIRC NSR and DIGIPRIME
2. Room 2 - LOOP Ports, Academy on Circular Economy and CICERONE

Room 1

The room was moderated by Mr Sander Bos (*Province of Fryslân Circular Economy and European Affairs Advisor*) with the technical support of Ms Sara Bergamin (*Veltha, REPLACE communication manager, DIGIPRIME*).

Mr Sander Bos welcomed the participants while briefly displaying the functioning of the last panel; he then presented the first topic of discussion: *Governance in Circular Economy*.

Mr Mogens Michael Møller (*Senior Consultant Sustainability Business Hub Fyn*) introduced the discussion focusing on the involvement of stakeholders in the governance processes, together with modalities for their successful engagement. In particular, the debate revolved around the obstacles hampering their participation, as well as the techniques and methods to ameliorate the cooperation among independent actors in circular economy.

Mr Sander Bos launched the second topic: *Roles of the Regions in the circular economy*.

The subject matter was explicated through examples by:

1. **Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg** - Stefanie Wodrig (*Senate Chancellery Hamburg – European Policy Department*). She introduced the City Climate Plan and green measures, linking these to the ongoing projects FORCE and CIRCUIT activities aiming at the minimization of the resource-leakage in the transition from a linear to a circular economy, as well as at the reduction of raw material consumption in the construction and development sector.
2. **Lodzkie Region** - Marcin Podgórski (*Head of the Unit Regional Offices in Brussels and Chengdu*). He explained the role of the region in supporting the circular innovation and Lodzkie direct involvement with the local stakeholders, in particular with the business area: highlighting how their strategy could be titled 'B to PA', meaning Business to Public Administration.

The moderators and the speakers closed the 3rd panel at 18.03 by thanking all participants for their time and the organizers for their efforts.

The promotion

The event was published in August 2020 on the official website of the European Week of Regions and Cities. The promotion has been done by both Climate KIC and Veltha (responsible for REPLACE communication and part of the DIGIPRIME consortium) through the websites and social medias.

The European Week of Regions and Cities allocated the maximum capacity of 100 participants to the event; the registration limit was quickly reached and 61 took part in the meeting.

Recording of the session available at the link

<https://euregionsweek2020-video.eu/video/developing-pathways-for-the-circular-economy>

Speakers and Moderators

Plenary session

Panel 1

Moderator: Mr Cristian Matti - Climate KIC, Transition HUB manager

Speaker: Ms Eva Sørensen - Roskilde University, Professor

Speaker: Ms Cliona Howie - Climate KIC, Head of Circular Economy

Panel 2

Speaker: Ms Isabel Süner - HWWI, Head of International Cooperation

Speaker: Mr Mogens Mogens Michael Møller - Business Hub Fyn, Senior Consultant Sustainability

Speaker: Mr Marcello Colledani - Politecnico di Milano, Professor

Speaker: Ms Maria Loloni - Climate KIC



Speaker: Ms Annalisa Spalazzi - Climate KIC, Regional Innovation Schemes

Speaker: Ms Laura Nolan – Climate KIC

Break-out Room 1

Panel 3

Moderator: Mr Sander Bos - Province of Fryslân, Circular Economy and European Affair Advisor

Technical moderator: Ms Sara Bergamin – Veltha, REPLACE communication manager, DIGIPRIME

Speaker: Mr Mogens Mogens Michael Møller - Business Hub Fyn, Senior Consultant Sustainability

Speaker: Ms Stefanie Wodrig - City of Hamburg Senate Chancellery, European Policy Department

Speaker: Mr Marcin Podgórski - Lodzkie Region, Head of Unit Regional Offices in Brussels, Chengdu