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**REDUCES**  
Interreg Europe



# REGIONAL ACTION PLAN CIRCULARITY FOR MINIMUM WASTE AND MORE VALUE IN BULGARIA





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## Part I – General information

**Project:** REthinking Sustainable  
Development in European Regions by  
Using Circular Economy Business Models/  
REDUCES

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## Part II – Policy context

### The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument(s) addressed: **The Policy Instrument addressed is Operational programme Environment (OPE) 2014-2020, Priority Axis – Waste.**

### Further details on the policy context and the way the action plan should contribute to improve the policy instrument:

OP Environment 2014 – 2020, Priority Axis 2 – Waste contributes to achieving the objectives: *3.1 Sustainable consumption and production and 3.2 Turning waste into a resource at EU level by 2020*. The purpose of OP Environment is to achieve compliance with the EU waste management hierarchy and objectives of national legislation. It funds measures for improved municipal waste management, in line with the National Waste Management Plan for the period 2014 - 2020. It should achieve reduction of waste going to landfill through re-use, recycling and recovery. Sustainable consumption and production will be achieved by funding of the measures laid down in Priority Axis 2 related to demonstration/pilot projects, incl. shifting consumption models and promoting sustainable development.

In reality the projects funded so far by Operational Program Environment 2014 – 2020 proved that there is a lack of technical capacity at municipal level to develop demonstration projects and business models contributing to waste reduction through proper waste management systems and better circular economy focused activities. Both regional authorities and companies lack information on material flows and scientific and technological issues. In addition, circular economy business models need to be demonstrated e.g. through demonstration projects and the analysis on the prospects for particular sectors and markets.

The key failure identified is the lack of specific support of OPE to introduce circular economy principles in waste management system. The main reason for this is simply that OPE supports development of landfills and the system relies mainly on the subsequent separation of mixed municipal waste. Although the support in the Waste sector (Priority Axis 2) is in line with the needs in the area of municipal waste management, the target set for increasing waste recycling capacity is not ambitious enough given the funds allocated for this purpose.



The investments in waste management infrastructure in Bulgaria are needed to ensure achievement of the circular economy goals regarding landfill disposal and the percentage of sorted waste collection. It is identified the need to provide specific support for demo projects for development of new, non-traditional waste management interventions, which will provide possibilities for increased recycling and re-use capacity on local/regional level and introduce circular economy models. It has also been recognised that achieving the targets for waste reduction built in the OP Environment is possible only through improved close collaboration between local authorities and businesses and citizens.

REDUCES activities triggered the idea of demonstration projects, with a view on effective introduction of circular economy models on municipal level through demonstration projects. With the REDUCES project implementation in Bulgaria number of Municipalities received support from EPF experts in preparation of demonstration projects for development of new activities/initiatives related to the circular economy. The objective was the local authorities to submit demonstration projects for financing under Procedure BG16M1OP002-2.009 – Demonstration waste management projects. The procedure was meant to finance activities related to preparation for reuse, and/or for recycling and prevention of household waste. **One project was approved for funding by the managing authority of OP Environment 2014 – 2020 - “Effective Waste Management in the Municipality of Smyadovo”** with registry number BG16M1OP002-2.009-0064 according ordinance № РД-ОП-66/ 16.11.2021. The project demonstrates a model for setting up of municipal demonstration center for preparation waste for reuse, and construction of repair and reuse center, collection of old clothing and textiles and conducting awareness raising campaign to promote the results of the demonstration project and to change citizens' behavior and make informed decisions in the management of household waste.

The Regional Action Plan construction process was carried out in close contact with all the stakeholders, including the Managing Authority through the learning process foreseen by the REDUCES project and carefully evaluating the good practices that could have a real transferability (in this moment) both on Regional and on National level in Bulgaria. The concept of transferability makes explicit reference to activities fostering reuse, recycle, recover and implementation of circular economy principles for green transition in Bulgaria.

The current Action Plan includes one Action:

***Action 1: Demonstration project in waste management to achieve circular economy goals for increased recycling and re-use capacity at municipal level***



## Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

### ACTION 1: Demonstration project in waste management to achieve circular economy goals for increased recycling and re-use capacity at municipal level

#### 1. Relevance to the project

The overall objective of REDUCES is to improve the implementation of regional policies in order to enable regions to adopt more environmentally sustainable ways of production and to introduce circular economy principles at company as well as local/regional level. Circular business models help companies to achieve resource efficiency and subsequent net revenue gains, and by doing so help regions achieve a more innovative, resilient and productive economy. Circularity is a sustainable alternative to the traditional linear (take-make-dispose) economic model, reducing waste to a minimum by reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products. As stated also in the European Circular Economy Action Plan the development and implementation of *enhanced waste policy in support of waste prevention and circularity is a must. The transition to circular economy models is only possible when local authorities businesses and citizens join efforts for most effective combinations of separate collection models and will guarantee high quality recycling and reuse.*

**Action 1** of the Regional Action Plan aims to demonstrate a model for prevention of household waste and waste reuse at municipal level. This will lead to reduced waste going to landfill through re-use, recycling and recovery. Sustainable consumption and production will be achieved by funding of a demonstration project in Municipality of Smyadovo “**Effective Waste Management in the Municipality of Smyadovo**” which demonstrates a model for setting up of municipal demonstration center for preparation waste for reuse, and construction of repair and reuse center. The demonstration project was approved for funding by OP Environment 2014 – 2020 on 16.11.2021 and the project duration is 18 months till May 2023.

During the first phase of the REDUCES project, the team members of Euro Perspectives Foundation (EPF) and University of Mining and Geology (UMG), Sofia together with the stakeholders participated actively in the interregional learning events. All the good practices and cases were gathered and presented to the Local Stakeholder Group providing detailed information on the essence of the circular economy models and how they can contribute to improved municipal waste management and increased companies’ resource efficiency.

The development of activities within Action 1 has been influenced by the exchange of experiences and knowledge achieved within the REDUCES project and more specifically the following:

- EPF and UMG team selected best practices that appeared most suited to the regional and national circumstances provided during the interregional learning events in Turku, Finland in 2019 and Maramures, 2021.



- Six stakeholder meetings, which took place in Sofia predominantly online. Representatives of Ministry of Environment, the Managing Authority of OPE Environment, Municipalities and companies applying circular economy business models participated in the stakeholder meetings and online interregional project meeting hosted in Bulgaria in December 2020.

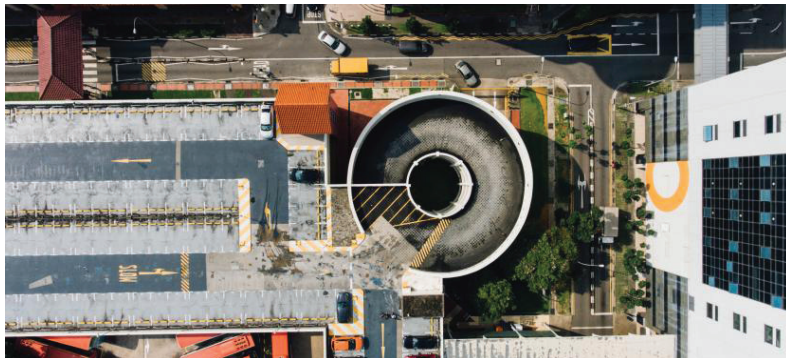
The Euro Perspectives Foundation conducted also a survey in March 2021 to identify to what extent the Bulgarian Municipalities being the main beneficiaries for funding under OP Environment, Axis Waste, are ready to implement activities/initiatives related to the circular economy principles. The survey included questions in sections such as: Understanding of the circular economy concept; Implementation of past, current activities/initiatives related to the circular economy; Local potentials and capacity for taking up future concrete circular economy actions/initiatives/measures; Enabling conditions and hindering factors for a circular transition.

The survey results outlined that although the administration and local business system have a low to medium level of understanding of the circular economy concept, activities to boost circular transition are under consideration. The intentions for future projects are predominantly in waste prevention (especially plastics), in the sectors of construction and textiles, following by packaging, furniture and agriculture. In addition it showed that the information which the municipalities are providing for people and businesses with regards to the opportunities from circular economy is not enough or even not provided at all. There is lack of information for the opportunities for businesses and people how they can get support for the application of these principles in their daily lives and business ventures.

The interregional exchange helped EPF and UMG to propose models for setting up municipal demonstration center for preparation waste for reuse, and construction of repair and reuse center, collection of old clothing and textiles and conducting awareness raising campaign to promote the results of the demonstration project and to change citizens' behavior and make informed decisions in the management of waste generate on the territory of the Municipality.

The development of Action 1 *“Demonstration project in waste management to achieve circular economy goals for increased recycling and re-use capacity at municipal level”*, has been influenced mainly by the exchange of experience and knowledge within the REDUCES project from two partner regions advanced in supporting transition to circular economy models. The two partner regions are Turku, Finland and Greater Manchester, United Kingdom.

- LP, Turku, Finland - Topinpuisto - A sharing platform for companies to share ideas and pilots
- LP, Turku, Finland – Reuse textiles store
- PP4 Greater Manchester, United Kingdom - Fundwaste



**Topinpuisto** platform demonstrates successful business co-operation around a waste centers or old landfills elsewhere in Finland. The managers and employees of waste facilities have exchanged ideas in the field. The co-operation makes it possible to engage companies and local authorities

to exchange know-how, to develop together and do projects. It is worth engaging corporate management and municipal key decision makers so that management is involved at a strategic level and that makes the cooperation as effective as possible.

Transferable element of the practice is the involvement of municipalities together with citizens and companies in joint efforts to realise activities related to circular economy. The Municipalities in Bulgaria are the ones directly responsible for introduction of circular economy models. According to the Law on Waste Management they are responsible for organizing the separate collection, preparation for reuse and recycling of the municipal waste, establishment of re-use and repair centers, and / or other means of waste prevention. The municipalities fulfill their obligations by concluding contracts with:

- Waste operators holding permits issued under the Waste Management Act and / or;
- Other organizations holding permissions in accordance with the Waste Management Act for carrying out activities for collection, transportation, recycling and / or recovery of waste on the territory of the municipality.

The activities of the municipal demonstration center for preparation of waste for reuse, and of the construction of repair and reuse center target households, companies active on the territory of the Municipality of Smyadovo and municipal enterprises, incl. schools and kindergartens.

Important lessons learned is the model of business co-operation which starts based on the waste management system applied by the municipalities' waste management systems.



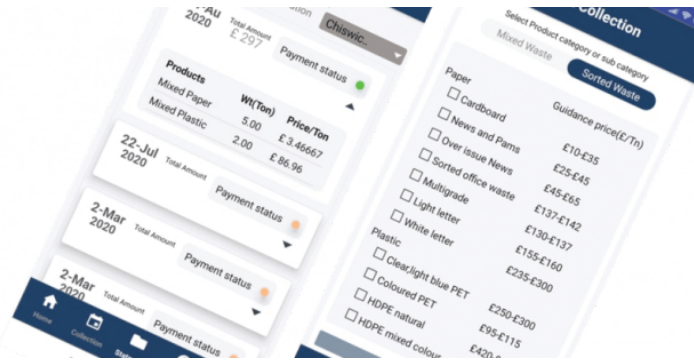
**Reuse textiles store** demonstrates a good solution for reuse before recycling following the waste hierarchy. The waste management company is unable to directly impact reducing waste, which is the first step of the waste hierarchy, but it can advance reuse and product-life extension. Waste fragments like reusable textiles that seen as





valuable are brought to reuse. The collection of old clothing and textiles in the Municipality of Smyadovo will result in similar activities. Instead of disposing the textile on the landfill this can be used as reusable textiles that seen as product for reuse or as a service.

**Fundwaste** is a tech-driven waste to wealth company dedicated to improving the environment by paying SMEs for their recycled paper, cardboard and plastics. It shows the importance of regional/national waste management policies with regards to collaborations between local authorities and operators in waste collection system. The focus on behavioural change amongst SMEs and citizens is of utmost importance for the successful operation of **Fundwaste** type of initiatives.



A lesson learnt is the collaboration between a paper and plastic waste collection company with small underserved businesses and organisations offering free collections and drop offs for their clean paper, cardboard and plastic waste. This is identified as a transferable element for the waste management system of Smyadovo Municipality. It is clear the solution to recycle the paper and plastic collected from the commercial entities, schools and households there is a need to monitor the quality of paper and plastic waste being collected, ensuring that the items passed on to manufacturers are always of a premium quality.

The experience gained through the good practices demonstrated is transferable to the local conditions when it comes to realisation of demonstration project in waste management to achieve circular economy goals for increased recycling and re-use capacity at municipal level.

## 1. Nature of the action

The Action envisages realisation of demonstration project in Municipality of Smyadovo. The project was approved by OP Environment 2014 – 2020 under Axis 2 Waste on 16.11.2021. The project includes measures/activities/investments for prevention of generation of daily municipal waste, incl. non-recyclable waste. Activities are planned for shredding and fragmentation of garden waste at the place of their generation and introduction of home composting in 160 households, in mayoralities, social institutions, schools and kindergartens, public green areas on the territory of the municipality of Smyadovo. As a measure for preparing the waste reuse, as well as to promote reuse and repair, it is planned to set up a repair and reuse center to collect old clothes and textiles, books and to organize an exchange center for unnecessary items. Conducting campaigns to promote the results of the demonstration project in order to change citizens' behavior and make informed decisions in the management of household waste. Drawing public attention to the prevention of the generation of household waste, the preparation for reuse and separate collection of household waste with subsequent recycling is the most important step in stimulating environmentally friendly behavioral change in order to create a zero-waste society.



The implementation of the activities foreseen in Action 1 started already in 2020. The EPF and UMG contribution comes from 3 main perspectives:

### **A. Support in project proposal preparation**

In this phase, the experts from EPF and UMG supported the Municipality in developing the proposals, thanks to their experience and knowledge. In addition REDUCES project was under preparation and the weaknesses and problems regarding development of centers for recycling and reuse to minimize the waste going to landfill and to support the transition to circular economy have been identified and included in the REDUCES project proposal. In addition the interregional event in Turku has taken place and the **Topinpuisto** platform was presented.

### **B. Support in project implementation**

After the project approval the municipality beneficiary is supported in development of analysis and rules so to minimise waste generation and realize waste streams separation for further reuse and recycling in households, schools and administrative buildings in the territories of the municipalities. Another important input by EPF, UMG and REDUCES good practices is in the planning process of setting up a repair and reuse center to collect old clothes and textiles, books and to organize an exchange center for unnecessary items. Development of information and awareness raising campaign to promote the results of the demonstration project in order to change citizens' behaviour and make informed decisions in the management of waste. Drawing public attention to the prevention of the generation of waste, the preparation for reuse and separate collection of household waste with subsequent recycling is the most important step in stimulating environmentally friendly behavioural change in order to create a zero-waste society.

### **C. Enhanced monitoring of project results, resulting into recommendations for the Managing Authority to improve the next Program Environment 2021 – 2027**

During the projects implementation period EPF will be involved in monitoring of indicators set. This includes reduction of waste in households and public buildings. The effectiveness of the information and awareness raising campaigns and how they influence the communities on the way to creating zero-waste society. The monitoring process will provide ground for development of recommendations to the Managing Authority for the next programming period to better support projects oriented to smart waste management and circularity. The upcoming forethinking and content preparation of the next municipal waste management plans could be discussed similarly among municipalities in Bulgaria.



## Activities already taken in Phase 1

<p>Jan – February, 2020</p>	<p>Submission of the demonstration project of the municipality of Smyadovo for funding under OPE.</p>
<p>November 2021 – March 2022</p>	<p><b>Support to elaboration of methodology for development of plans and models for demonstration project adopting REDUCES GPs.</b> After the approval of the project the municipality-beneficiary is supported in development of analysis and rules so to minimize waste generation and to achieve circular economy goals for increased recycling and re-use capacity at municipal level</p>
<p>May 2022 to the end of the project</p>	<p><b>Communication campaign for awareness raising</b> among municipalities, beneficiaries under the OP Environment demonstration projects for development of new, non-traditional successful activities and intervention for transition to circular economy. The initiative initially is addressing the Municipality of Smyadovo where the demonstration project, funded by OP Environment 2014 – 2021 is being implemented.</p> <p>However due to similarity in problems in the transition process to circular economy and communities engagement in resolving it the communication campaign for awareness raising will be summarised in a form of a toolkit and can be used by other municipalities in Bulgaria.</p> <p>The development and implementation of information and awareness raising campaigns to promote the results of the demonstration project in order to shift consumption models and promote sustainable development will continue to the end of the project implementation and beyond. Drawing public attention to the prevention of the generation of waste, the preparation for reuse and separate collection of waste with subsequent recycling is the most important step in stimulating environmentally friendly behavioural change in order to create a zero-waste society.</p>



## Steps to be followed in Phase 2

<p><b>July 2022 – July 2023</b></p>	<p><b>Monitoring of the demonstration project</b> implementation with respect to the level of transition to circular economy models.</p> <p>The monitoring activities will serve as a ground to develop recommendations to Program Environment 2021 - 2027 on issues like effective awareness raising campaigns among citizens and businesses on municipal level related to circular economy models. Another important issue is how to motivate the businesses and/or citizens to contribute to separate waste for the purposes of circularity and to create suitable environment and infrastructure in this respect.</p> <p>The recommendations will be submitted initially at the end of Semester 6 of REDUCES project implementation and continue on a regular base during Phase 2 by submitting information and recommendation letters to the MA of Program Environment.</p>
<p><b>September 2022</b></p>	<p><b>Organisation of National Event on waste management and circular economy models</b> to strengthen Bulgarian Municipalities cooperation in applying activities and initiatives to support the transition to circular economy.</p>
<p><b>July 2022 – July 2023</b></p>	<p>Promotion of international relationships, activation and involvement of municipalities in circular economy investment and research projects.</p>
<p><b>July 2022 – July 2023</b></p>	<p>National and international dissemination of new solutions developed in the area as well as bringing good practices identified elsewhere.</p>





## 2. Stakeholders involved

Name of Organisation	Role in Action Plan
<b>Euro Perspectives Foundation (EPF)</b>	EPF is a REDUCES project partner with 13 years of experience in environmental policy development and implementation. EPF major priority has always been protection of environment, renewability, innovation and sustainable development. EPF will contribute with transfer of examples on policies in waste management and circular economy models to the municipalities and with development and implementation of information campaigns.
<b>Bulgarian Association of Municipal Environmental Experts (BAMEE)</b>	BAMEE has more than 25 years of experience in environmental policy development and implementation. BAMEE's major priority has always been waste management at local level and thus BAMEE will contribute to the involvement of the Bulgarian Municipalities in the workshops and National event and information campaign realisation.
<b>Ministry of Environment Directorate Waste Management and MA OP Environment (MOEW)</b>	MOEW is the institution creating among others the policy on waste management and circular economy, assisted by Directorate Waste management and soil protection, in accordance with EU and national legislation.
<b>Executive Environment Agency (ExEA)</b>	ExEA is an administration with the Minister of Environment and Water to carry out management, coordination and information functions as regards the control and environmental protection in Bulgaria. It is managing the National Waste Information System. Provides guidance on waste information collection and analysis of data.
<b>Municipality of Smaydovo</b>	The Municipality is implementing the demonstration project.

## 3. Costs and Funding Sources

Costs	Funding Sources
<b>The amount of the funding for the project is EUR 199 754.</b>	The amount is estimated based on the approved budget of the projects by OP Environment 2014 -2020 of which 85% ERDF contribution and 15% National co-financing

The costs for development and implementation of the communication campaigns for awareness raising, organisation of thematic workshops and other activities included in the Action Plan are covered by EPF.



## Risk and Contingency Plans

In the table below the main potential risks are described related to this Policy Improvement and eventual contingency plans that are identified.

Description of Risk	Level of probability (High, Medium, Low)	Description of Contingency Plan
Capacity available at Municipal level to involve the different participants in the activities of the center	Medium	Support by EPF in development of strong awareness campaign
Lack of finance at municipal level for the project realisation	Medium	Support to municipal project management teams in the project implementation process
The REDUCES lessons and solutions learned are not utilised	Low	Regular thematic workshops and information sharing with stakeholders and the municipalities in Bulgaria on transition to circular economy models and good practices applied in REDUCES project

### Monitoring

#### Self-defined Performance Indicators

Indicator	Target	Means of Verification
Number of demonstration projects in waste management to achieve circular economy goals for increased recycling and re-use capacity at municipal level	1	Signed contract for funding by OPE 2014 -2020

### Output Indicators

Indicator	Target	Means of Verification
Communication campaign for awareness raising	Developed <b>one</b> communication plan Organisation of <b>1</b> thematic workshops online Publications of <b>4</b> flyers containing information on the different waste streams	Press releases, materials developed, communication plan developed
Organisation of National Event on waste management	1	Press releases, materials developed



### Signatures

**Signature**

Name of Signatory Vikra Andonova

Position Chair of Board, Euro Perspectives Foundation

Date 15.06.2022

Stamp (if available) \_\_\_\_\_



**Signature**

Name of Signatory Prof. Trayko Kopriv, PhD

Position Rector of University of Mining and Geology "St. Ivan Rilski"

Date 15.06.2022

Stamp (if available) \_\_\_\_\_



**Signature**

Name of Signatory Nikolay Stojimov

Position Deputy Minister MOEW

Date 15.06.2022

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