

D11. COLLECTION OF IDEAS ROMANIA



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Romania is witnessing a growing awareness of environmental issues, with citizens increasingly recognizing the importance of embracing sustainable practices. The concept of a circular economy, designed to minimize waste and maximize resource efficiency, is gaining traction.

Basic concepts such as recycling and waste reduction are well understood by a significant portion of the population. Romanian citizens are increasingly familiar with the importance of separating recyclables, composting organic waste, and reducing single-use plastics. However, there remains room for deeper understanding of advanced circular economy principles, such as the significance of product life cycles, the sharing economy, and the importance of closing the loop in production and consumption.

This report presents the topics of discussion occurred during the Problem Solving event organised in Timisoara with the conclusions drawn from the audience's collective ideas.

Participants actively contributed their thoughts on "things that should be done and things that can be done" to foster a more circular economy, protect the environment, and encourage citizen engagement through e-democracy.

The insights captured in this report reflect the collaborative spirit and diverse perspectives that make the WE-DEMOCRACY initiative truly impactful.

Participants' perceptions of the topics discussed

Circular economy and global environmental challenges.

The most common strategies mentioned by the participants in integrating the concept of circular economy at the national level would be addressed to the decision-makers at national level: public awareness campaigns using various media channels (emphasize the benefits of a circular economy, encouraging citizens to adopt eco-friendly practices and make informed choices); conduct training programs for professionals, entrepreneurs, and government officials on circular economy concepts and implementation strategies (enhance the skills needed for a successful transition); encourage the adoption of circular design standards in manufacturing and product development; promote the creation of products that are longer lasting, easy to repair and recyclable.

Moreover, the participants stressed the imperative for immediate and collective action to reduce the effects of global warming from fossil fuels, reflecting a shared awareness of the urgency of addressing this pressing environmental problem.

The participants also highlighted specific and key strategies to overcome this obstacle both at individual level and governmental: Conserve energy at home; use public transportation, carpool, bike, or walk, develop and improve public transportation systems; invest in alternative transportation options, and promote electric vehicles (at local level this action is very well defined, a best part of the public transportation is electric or related to the tram); participate in or support tree planting initiatives; stay informed and advocate for policies that promote renewable energy; reduce emissions and address climate change; educate others about the impact of fossil fuels on global warming and the importance of sustainable

practices; conduct public awareness campaigns to inform citizens about climate change and encourage sustainable behaviours. This collective commitment underlines the importance of both individual and governmental efforts in promoting the concept of the circular economy and specific strategies to reduce the effects of global warming caused by fossil fuels.

UN2030 Agenda

Some of the participants of the national event, especially the invited students, hardly identified the meaning of the UN2023 Agenda and its specific goals, but they were also interested to know its meaning and relevance.

In order to be better informed about the UN2023 Agenda, participants mentioned specific actions to be considered: researching and reading official documents related to the UN2030 Agenda; visit the United Nations website and explore resources such as reports, publications, and official documentation outlining the agenda's goals and targets; enroll in online courses or webinars that provide in-depth insights into the UN2030 Agenda; attend workshops, seminars, and events organized by local community groups, universities, or NGOs that focus on sustainable development and the UN2030 Agenda (these events often provide valuable information and opportunities for discussions); connect with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of sustainable development; stay updated by following official social media accounts and websites of UN agencies responsible for implementing different aspects of the agenda; explore reports and publications released by organizations, think tanks, and research institutions that analyze and discuss the impact and challenges of the UN2030 Agenda; get involved in volunteer activities that focus on sustainable development and align with the goals of the UN2030 Agenda. By combining these approaches, individuals can gain a comprehensive understanding of the UN2030 Agenda and contribute to the global effort towards achieving its objectives.

Economic benefits of embracing a circular economy

A key focus was the role of the circular economy in job creation. Participants engaged in discussions on how the transition from a linear to a circular model can open up new job opportunities in various sectors.

An important aspect of the discussion focused on how a circular economy can reduce the environmental costs associated with traditional consumption patterns. By promoting recycling, reuse and sustainable practices, strategies were presented and best practices were shared on how circularity can contribute to reducing pollution, conserving natural resources and minimising the global ecological footprint.

Discussions with national participants at the event resulted in other specific examples illustrating the economic benefits associated with circular practices: circular economies stimulate the development of innovative products and services (entrepreneurs can thrive by setting up businesses specialising in repairing, refurbishing or reusing goods, thus contributing to economic dynamism); encouraging the design of products that prioritise durability and ease of maintenance creates demand for repair and maintenance services;

consumer demand for sustainable products opens up markets for companies producing green goods; companies that align themselves with circular principles gain a competitive advantage, attracting environmentally-minded consumers and stimulating economic growth.

EU and national policies

A considerable proportion of the invited participants were not previously aware of the initiatives presented. The participants suggested the following key recommendations for decision makers on how individuals can learn more facile and find information about the EU and national policies: crafting messages that resonate with diverse audiences, emphasizing the benefits of circularity; utilizing various communication channels, such as social media, educational programs, disseminating information but also fostering a sense of urgency among citizens comprehensive understanding and make visible how circular economies can thrive, with citizens at the forefront of sustainable change.

Waste management, recycling and reuse

Through the session connected to „educating and inspiring citizens” the aim was to create a sense of responsibility and inspire positive action towards circular behaviour of the participants who attended the event organized in Timisoara. Moreover, the session aimed to explore effective strategies for educating and inspiring citizens in general and to identify approaches that resonate with specific behaviours. Concrete examples and case studies were presented from the representatives of key companies at local level to showcase how circular behaviours can seamlessly integrate into daily life. Participants explored actionable steps that individuals can take to contribute to a circular economy, fostering a culture of sustainability.

Recommendations for policy makers from the floor

To communicate clear and consistent guidelines for recycling practices to the public, industries, and waste management entities; introducing incentives for businesses that adopt circular economy principles, such as designing products for sustainability and recyclability; launch educational programs to inform the public and businesses about the importance of waste reduction, recycling, and reuse; encourage collaboration between government agencies, businesses, NGOs, and local communities for effective waste management solutions; introduce regulations requiring clear labelling of products to indicate recyclability and appropriate disposal methods; embrace a minimalist lifestyle by purchasing only what is essential, separate recyclables from general waste and follow local recycling guideline; choose products made from recycled materials or with minimal packaging; explore creative ways to repurpose items into new and useful products; research and support companies with sustainable and circular business practices; participate in local community initiatives focused on waste reduction and circular economy practices; share knowledge about circular economy principles with friends, family, and peers; prioritize products known for durability and longevity.

Consumer behaviour and engagement

By exploring topics such as food waste, textile recycling and eco-friendly packaging, participants were enthusiastic to share various ways in which circular principles can be integrated into everyday life and business operations.

As an overview, participants shared their ideas on how they can contribute to a circular economy in the areas of food waste, textile recycling and green packaging: plan your meals to avoid overbuying groceries and ensure all items are used before they expire; familiarize yourself with date labels on food products, distinguishing between "use by," "sell by," and "best before" dates; donate gently used clothing to local charities; find nearby textile recycling bins and store old clothes, linen or textiles; repair damaged clothing instead of discarding it, extending its lifespan; when purchasing new clothing, choose brands committed to sustainable and circular fashion practices; bring reusable bags when shopping to minimize the use of single-use plastic bags; prioritize products packaged in sustainable materials like cardboard, glass, or compostable packaging.

Conclusions

The event generating the importance of integrating circular economy principles into national dialogues. Participants emphasized the need for public awareness campaigns, training programs, and the adoption of circular design standards to promote sustainable practices. The recognition of the economic benefits of a circular economy, particularly in job creation and innovative product development, further emphasized the potential for positive change. As participants shared their ideas on waste management, recycling, and consumer behaviour, a common theme emerged - the crucial role of informed and engaged citizens. The event highlighted the fact that individuals play a central role in driving circular economies, and their informed choices can collectively make a significant impact.