



Project: WE-NET – Working for ENvironmentally Educated Towns

**Recommendations for EU institutions on promoting the circular
economy model at the local level across Europe**

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The project WE-NET

WE – NET (Working for Environmentally Educated Towns), co-funded by the Europe for Citizens programme, brings together local authorities and civil society associations from 8 countries in wider Europe and aims at establishing a self-sustainable platform of dialogue and exchange to develop effective local policies and practices promoting the implementation of the circular economy model at the local level, with particular focus on recycling.

The general objective of the project is to facilitate knowledge exchange and build up a basis of further communication and cooperation beyond this project. The recycling theme promoted by the project plays a central role within the overall sustainable development agenda, especially in respect with a rapidly growing urbanisation, environmental degradation, human security and well-being of future generations.

This project has involved in its activities more than 500 local institutions, civil society associations and ordinary citizens, with a particular attention on young people.

Recommendations

The list of recommendations has been developed on the occasion of the final transnational meeting of the project WE-NET. After a two-year process in which partners developed educational and awareness raising activities at the local level and 3 transnational activities aimed at producing knowledge transfer, partners reunited in Mesagne, Italy to reflect on the lessons learnt and, based on these, develop a set of recommendations for EU institutions to better support the implementation of the circular economy model at the local level across Europe. As many as 50 representatives of the 12 partners were split into 4 working groups and the draft recommendations were discussed and adopted in plenary.

1. be more ambitious in promoting the model of circular economy at the local level, connecting it with the model of solidarity economy;
2. have a stronger and more structured dialogue with local authorities and civil society actors as source of expertise in the promotion and implementation of the model;
3. reinforce direct communication mechanisms between the EU and the local level; in particular, reduce the risks to lose or misinterpret initial requests and information made by local stakeholders;
4. support local actors (local authorities and civil society organisations) with more capacity building actions aimed at reinforcing their capacity to make use of resources from the EU level so as to strengthen their action in promoting the circular economy model at the local level. In some communities the expertise in the circular economy model is not accompanied by adequate resources to bring effective change;
5. reinforce the mechanisms and the corresponding financial instruments promoting an active and dynamic system of transfer of innovation and good practice practice at the local level. Better address the language barrier issue which often hamper the implementation and the exchange of knowledge among local communities;
6. be more flexible in the guidelines of EU programmes supporting the application of the circular economy model in order to be more inclusive in the eligibility of stakeholders and better adapt the action to the needs of each community and Member State;
7. make EU programmes more easy to access for local stakeholders; the difficulty in understanding the jargon and the regulations of certain programmes discourages local actors to reinforce their action through EU resources;
8. reinforce the mechanisms requiring high standards in waste management in the Member States;
9. support actions and initiatives empowering citizens to be active actors in implementing on a small scale the circular economy model;
10. support actions promoting multi-level governance approaches to circular economy as successful evidence based policy;

11. promote the adoption at the Member State level of sustainable development, environmental protection and circular economy as part of the educational curricula;
12. strengthen incentive mechanisms for enterprises to apply the circular economy model in the supply chain;
13. reinforce mechanisms aimed at educating citizens on sustainable development and environmental protection and strengthen the communication action on why and how the circular economy model represents a winning model for both the community as a whole and the single citizen.