



CIRCULAR CITIES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION – WORKSHOP REPORT

Taking place in JDE63 of the EESC during the first session, the workshop on how circular cities can help climate change mitigation had a larger than expected turn-out of participants with around 50 people attending.

The objective of the workshop was to share best practices for circular policy-making that can help with climate adaptation, looking at an urban context. Successes and challenges were discovered, along with discussions on how to scale up activities and solutions for cities.

Success Stories



The workshop was organised by EUROCITIES, where Dorthe Nielsen, EUROCITIES policy director, moderated a [panel discussion](#), followed by four "deep-dive" sessions on a series of topics. Harald Friedl, of Circle Economy, kick-started the presentations by outlining how the [circular economy can be a key lever](#) in limiting climate emissions through recovery and reuse of materials, lifetime extensions on products, using sharing and service models and designing for circularity. The evidence for this? According to the UNDP (and found within the presentation), 67% of global greenhouse gas emissions are related to material management, and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation reports that India reduced their emissions by 40% compared

to Business as Usual through a change to a Circular Economy. So, material management needs to be key for any city strategy to implement a circular economy that helps with tackling change.

One example of this in practice is the city of Amsterdam, represented by Eveline Jonkhoff, circular economy manager. Amsterdam plans to reduce 95% of GHG emissions by 2050 and circular economy strategy will be helping in achieving this target. Starting in 2015, the city has had 770 circular economy projects, which were evaluated in 2017. The main outcome? To prove that it is realistic and profitable to transition to a circular city. Currently the city is experimenting with the 'Doughnut Economics' approach as a framework for sustainable holistic economic development.

From a governance perspective, Oriana Romano (*pictured centre, with Audrey Nugent on the left and Cillian Lohan on the right*) of the OECD discussed the [economics and governance models](#) for circular economy in cities, providing a circular framework to managing system change through people, policy and places; handling megatrends, such as the effect of demographic growth and urbanisation; and through the development of socio-economic, environmental and technological opportunities. A circular economy is not an end in itself, but a means to tackle the megatrends such as climate change. Cillian Lohan of the EESC talked about the need for having a strategic approach, and how different sectors and actors have different ideas on what the circular economy is, and what it means for them. There is a role here, therefore, for the EESC and the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, to help bring people together to share their experiences and viewpoints on taking forward a strategy for a circular economy.



From a city perspective, Audrey Nugent of the World Green Building Council talked about the role of buildings, and how a life-cycle approach to the design of buildings can support action to mitigate climate change, speed transition to circular economy as well as providing benefits for human health.

During the "deep-dive" session, the City of Copenhagen gave an example of the re-use of plastic waste, turning this material flow from a linear one to a circular one, through the production of public waste bins, outdoor furniture and industrial products.



New Challenges

During the discussion and the "deep-dive" sessions with Hakon Jentoft of the Urban Agenda Partnership for the Circular Economy, Jonas Bystrom of the European Investment Bank (EIB), Veolia, and Mette Skovgaard of the City of Copenhagen, participants shared their ideas on what the challenges are to circular economy in cities.

- From the EIB, there was advice on the importance of identifying the funding landscape and to help companies with information on revenue, profits and related risks; to overcome the challenge of access to finance
- The company Veolia discussed the difficulty in having all stakeholders on the supply chain coming on board
- The issue of what exactly the circular economy is was also discussed – with around 40 different definitions available, which may cause confusion
- How then to measure the circular economy? The OECD has collected over 1000 indicators, again referring to the impact of a lack of definition, as well as a lack of economic and social measurement
- There was a difficulty in getting the market on board, for example, in the design of buildings for circularity; and the role of public procurement in supporting or pushing this was given as a potential starting point to overcoming this challenge



Though for all of these challenges, the examples of cities that have worked towards a circular economy – Amsterdam and Copenhagen the examples put forward in this workshop – have proved that it is possible, and, as Eveline Jonkhoff said, realistic and profitable!

What's Next?

- The **Urban Agenda Partnership for a Circular Economy** is currently working on the implementation of 12 actions leading to better knowledge, improved regulation and increased access to funding for cities transitioning towards a circular economy.
- The **Ellen MacArthur Foundation** is launching **Circular Economy in Cities**, a suite of easily accessible online resources (urban policy instruments, city-led case studies) for pioneering cities to be disseminated globally.
- **Circle Economy** is currently testing a regional focus for bringing the circular economy to small and medium sized cities, and bringing together municipalities.
- The **City of Amsterdam's** 2020-2025 strategy will focus on construction, biomass and food value chains, plus the consumer value chain.
- The **OECD** is running a global survey on what circular economy means in a city, and will hold an international networking event in 2019 and 2020 to coordinate activities on a sub-national and national level. The organisation is also developing indicators and self-assessment evaluation tools.
- The **EESC** expects to publish a study in May of this year on Circular Economy Strategies across Europe, which looks at such strategies and roadmaps on a national, regional and city/local level.

Want to keep the conversation going? Contribute your good practice on circulareconomy.europa.eu, join the online forum or drop us a line: CEStakeholderEU@eesc.europa.eu

