

The world is on the brink of imminent climate change, which is already affecting all of us, whether we realise it or not. More and more atypical phenomena are being observed, and human activity is one of the main factors contributing to rapid climate change. This is the reason why society is at the heart of the change, in order to limit the negative consequences that will result in a multitude of consequences for the population, especially among less developed countries.

For years, one of the municipality's priorities has been to work to reduce humanity's negative footprint on nature, and the capabilities of modern technology allow us to use and implement various methods and systems that result in zero emissions and waste. However, this in turn is a very complex and labour-intensive process that encompasses all areas of our lives and the economy. Understanding this, we have been working for years with employers in the municipality as well as individual citizens to find solutions to reduce, as a result of human activities, pollutants. We have developed various projects to improve energy efficiency in buildings, improve green spaces, tree planting campaigns, waste management projects, but we still have a lot of work to do in this area.

One of the important elements for a successful struggle is to involve civil society and SMEs, because we need change to embrace all of us, from individuals, small organisations, to the public administration and large enterprises, to one of the options for quickly tackling humanity's adverse impact on nature, namely, the introduction of a circular economy. And why a circular economy ?

The demand for raw materials and energy resources is growing, but many of them are limited in quantity. Often they are not available within the EU and European countries are becoming dependent on imports from other countries.

The effect on the environment should not be underestimated - the extraction and consumption of raw materials increases energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. Using raw materials more wisely can help in the fight against climate change.

What are the benefits ?

Waste reduction, eco-design, reuse and similar measures can save EU businesses a lot of money and reduce overall annual greenhouse gas emissions. Currently, the production of materials we use in our daily lives generates around 45% of EU emissions.

The transition to a circular economy will reduce environmental pollution, alleviate raw material sourcing problems, boost innovation and competitiveness. The change has the potential to add a further 0.5% to EU GDP and create 700,000 jobs in Europe by 2030.

The European Union's general policy on the circular economy is evolving and our country is aware of the challenges that lie ahead, as well as the duration of such a transformation of societal attitudes, economic processes and institutional priorities. The transition to a circular economy will provide the country with economic growth and a better environment. The necessary institutional, financial and human resources will be mobilised for this purpose.

Globally, many practices and elements of the circular economy have been developed and implemented in society, and if we want to preserve our planet, we urgently need to implement it at all levels of society. Many ready-made solutions to problems sit developed in scientific organizations or in companies with development activities, but due to the difficulty of exchanging international experiences, they hardly reach in time to be implemented or funded, many international companies are open to cooperation and investment, as well as to participation in various partnership projects. In this regard, it is also necessary to promote the exchange of experiences with international

organizations and the creation of partnerships from different countries to facilitate and accelerate the transition, as well as reduce the negative consequences of the transformation of the economy.

On the other hand, each company, scientific organisation and administration has its own partial experience and observations on the processes and possibilities for implementing different measures, models or options for introducing processes or facilitating/stimulating them. Connecting these individual units and providing opportunities for sharing and discussion will enable the creation of partnerships, ideas, developments and knowledge to facilitate the transition to a circular economy and minimise the business and consumer impacts of these actions.

The Municipality of Devnya has made the circular economy a long-term development policy priority. The circular economy transition strategy is the first and important step in this direction. For this reason and thanks to the implementation of the project we have started the development and implementation of the strategy. It will enable us to analyse the problems and potential solutions, which will allow targeted action to be taken to change legislation and/or introduce measures for the given sector and desired policy. Strengthen institutionalised cooperation between regional authorities and agribusiness supporters to create new business opportunities.

The long-term objectives set by the Municipality of Devnya are related to:

- o Achieving economic transformation, increasing resource efficiency, increasing the added value of industrial production. Consumption of some products will be replaced by services, while others will become suitable for longer use.

- o Individual productions to be linked so that they exist in symbiosis.

- o Reduce the amount of waste landfilled to a minimum, return waste back into the production cycle and recycle it.

- o Significantly increasing the competitiveness and potential of Bulgarian producers, but also significantly reducing administrative costs and risks for companies.

- o Increasing the financial capacity of companies to reinvest in improving production technologies.

- o By exchanging experiences with partners from countries where the circular economy is developing, Bulgarian cities increase the opportunity to become attractive places to live, local authorities to optimise their waste management costs and businesses to find new profitable models for development.

Making the project happen has helped us get closer to our goal. We were able to engage civil society with the problems that each of us causes directly or indirectly, drawing attention to the possibilities of the circular economy and the role of society in its implementation. There are many examples and successful practices of its introduction in the world with many proven benefits, but still a very large part of the population does not pay enough attention to the problems it causes with its consumption and waste management, and to the possibilities of the circular economy.

The project involved experts who shared international experiences and opportunities for the introduction of circular economy, discussed with the public the possibilities, benefits and the need for the recent introduction of different models, the problems and fears among different groups - citizens, administrations, SMEs, NGOs, etc. The possibilities of implementing the latest measures and the importance of the participation of the whole civil society in achieving successful circular economy methods.

Through the implementation of the project, we were able to bring together representatives from different organisations and civil society in a three-day conference that took place in early 10-12 October 2022. In the town of. This contributed to engaging civil society with the problems that each of us creates directly or indirectly, drawing attention to the opportunities of the circular economy and the role of society in its implementation. During the event, guests from 5 different countries from Europe, representing 7 regions, took part, namely - R. Italy from the municipality of Foiano di Valfortore, R. Malta - the municipalities of Birgu and Garb, R. Greece - NGO - "International Centre for Sustainable Development" from the Municipality of Ioannina, and from the Municipality of Agia, R. Estonia - NGO - EESty - "People to people". An online room and live streaming of the event was also organized for those who were worried to physically participate in the event or were prevented.

The circular economy has been widely discussed and applied in a number of economies, but it is by its nature not a universal technology and method ready to be implemented in every place due to the many differences and peculiarities of local society, economy and administration. If a solution is workable in one place, its implementation in another place would have a negative effect. On the other hand, a circular economy needs to cover all the people and organisations involved in the field from start to finish or else the chain would be broken.

This is the main reason why the project involves organisations from 5 different countries and regions (Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Malta and Estonia). In this way we were able to attract and share experiences from different places, using their solutions and models, discussing potential problems and developing the systems used to improve their effectiveness. In this way, in each of the regions we will be able to extend the scope and apply proven methods that would be appropriate for the specific region.

Each of the organisations involved has a strong track record in implementing different measures and the opportunity to contribute to the exchange of successful and practical practices, have a wide range of experts, and an interest in continuing the implementation and multiplication of the project.

The project proposal focuses entirely on this priority area for the whole world, engaging civil society and institutions in a debate dedicated to the future of Europe in an era of increasing threats to climate and humanity caused by man himself.

With the launch of the project proposal, a group was formed by each of the project partners to create and coordinate the work programme and to attract participants to the event. In order to achieve the intended objectives, we envisaged the organisation and delivery of a multi-panel event providing guidance on specific topics to be discussed. Each of the panels has a specific theme which includes the following modules - introduction to the climate footprint we leave in the identified area, issues related to the implementation of new models - technologies, debating among the participants, presenting new technologies and successful practices in the field and debating about the possibilities of implementing projects in these areas.

The main thematic areas were focused in the following areas:

- Circular Economy in SMEs;
- The circular economy in our daily life and the role of civil society in its implementation and the possibilities to limit the negative consequences of our consumption;
- The circular economy in municipal and district public administration;

- The circular economy and the problems faced by disadvantaged people, opportunities for support and mitigation of negative environmental processes.

The event attracted experts and willing participants from different countries, ready to join in the debates and sharing of experiences between each one. Representatives from the following groups were involved in the event:

- Citizens from rural and urban areas - including youth and disadvantaged people from Italy, Greece and Malta;

- Representatives of different city, municipal and district administrative structures - from Italy, Greece, Estonia and Malta;

- Representatives of small and medium-sized businesses - from Greece, Italy and Malta;

- Representatives of large processing plants such as - Devnya Cement, Agropolichim and Solvay Soda;

- Representatives of scientific organizations and experts in the field. The event was attended by representatives of scientific organizations such as "Institute of Cryobiology and Food Technology", "Innovative Biostimulants" Association, Technical University V.- Varna,

The project team organized the three-day event, which was held in the city of. The project was supported by a team of partners. The program and the topics were detailed, presentation materials were prepared and information about the event was disseminated in the digital space and among the partner network of each of the applicants.

The planned three-day event (conference) succeeded in creating conditions for free discussion between citizens, organizations and experts in different fields on predefined topics, divided into different panels.

All partner organisations and their experiences in the field of circular economy were presented, topics for discussion were raised, in which invited experts and guests took part, different issues were addressed and experiences that could be used by the organisations were shared.

In order to reach a wider audience, the conference was also broadcast online on a virtual platform. This was in order to allow all those who, due to fear or inability to physically attend the event, were able to participate.

Dividing the panels into specific areas and including an online link helped us to enable a wider range of people and experts to take part and reduce inconvenience as well as risk to people's health.

Presentation materials were prepared by each of the project partners for the event - a visual presentation of their good practice and experience, as well as good examples that could be replicated in different locations.

After the end of the discussion part, a visit was organized to several enterprises in the municipality, where the participants were able to see some of the latest innovations and implemented innovations in local enterprises. In this way, some of the successful projects in the field of circular economy and the opportunities for cooperation and experience multiplication were seen in practice.

Last but not least, the programme included a visit to local cultural sites and an introduction to the ancient history of the city. An important part of EU society is getting to know the cultures and

bringing the different nations closer together to improve understanding and create lasting relationships within the community.

The implementation of the project activities has also contributed to familiarising the participants with the characteristics of the other partners. This increased trust and improved relations between the citizens of the different countries. It has also contributed to the understanding of the cultural diversity of Europe and increased cross-border cooperation between organisations to continue the implementation of activities and develop new projects. Problems can only be solved by working together, and working together with a common problem always leads to improved relations, cooperation and the building of lasting partnerships.

Thanks to the help provided, we were able to realize a wonderful three-day event, which managed to bring together representatives from 5 different countries and 7 regions and which has the potential to have laid the foundation for many other activities, dissemination and implementation of different practices. We have established a new partnership and found many new friends with whom we will continue our struggle to implement different types of policies and activities for the implementation and promotion of circular economy in different regions.

The activities implemented have helped to encourage civil society to get involved in decision-making processes at national and European level and to learn about the diversity of cultural characteristics of the different nationalities that make up the European Union.

Experts from different fields and areas of activity were brought together, experiences and good practices were shared, which also helped to understand the environmental problems, the damage that humanity causes through its consumption, economy and desires. Representatives from 5 countries and 7 different fields, including experts from scientific institutes and organizations, Universities, NGOs, micro, small, medium and large enterprises, farmers, cultural organizations, civil society and governmental bodies participated in the three-day gathering.

We have laid the foundations and created the preconditions for the establishment of collaborations between the separated organizations and institutions, the creation of an active civil opinion and willingness to participate in the search and implementation of measures for the implementation of different models and elements to achieve a circular economy.

At the end of the project a cooperation agreement was signed between the Municipality of Devnya (Bulgaria) and the common Foiano Di Valfortore (Italy), with which we continue our work after the completion of the project activities.

Thanks to the extensive discussion and involvement of different experts we have also achieved an improved understanding of civil society of the importance and cooperation with different organizations and working together to find adequate solutions to the problems.

The event also helped us to develop cooperation between the organizations that participated in the project activities and to plan next steps and opportunities for cooperation and implementation of joint projects in this field. The first step in this direction is also the signing of a cooperation agreement between the municipality of Foiano Di ValFortore (Italy) and the municipality of Devnya (Bulgaria) for support in the field of circular economy, innovation, education, tourism and social activities.

During the event, different types of practices and models were shared by invited guests and experts from different organisations for the implementation of circular economy, which helped to plan

for the implementation of different measures and models in the administration, private sector and civil society.

Some of the interesting models that were shared were:

- Implementation of a municipal system for collecting food scraps from food service establishments and handing them over to create animal feed;

- Implementing a municipal system for collecting food from restaurants and handing it over to people from socially vulnerable groups;

- Implementation of a municipal system for the collection of organic waste from which components for soil enrichment are produced;

- Innovative system for introducing biostimulants in agro-industry to improve germination, resistance from blight and pests, increase yield of annual crops for agro-industry. They are produced from completely organic compounds without the addition of artificial chemical elements and substances;

- Innovative system to produce healthy food supplements from quail eggs and increase the shelf life of the products;

- Innovative "Cyclone" system for cleaning the air in cities and major polluters using minimal operating and maintenance resources, improving the health of urban residents and significantly reducing fine particulate matter in the atmosphere;

- An electronic system to disseminate knowledge and good practice to stakeholders, including linking SMEs to scientific organisations where appropriate;

- A system to monitor environmental pollutants using beehives.

The implementation of this event also achieved the following results:

- Created partnerships for the development of different projects between scientific organisations and the private sector;

- Sharing good practices and examples that will serve as a basis for building new models and technologies;

- created lasting and sustainable cooperation between the participating organisations;

- create a lasting and sustainable collaboration between the SMEs, scientific organisations, NGOs and civil society present;

- create the conditions for the introduction of circular economy models and elements in different areas;

- create cooperation between scientific organisations and SMEs, civil society;

- encourage civil society participation in decision-making processes at different levels - regional, national and European;

- encourage civil society to protect the environment and to take preventive measures;

- increase the knowledge and skills of the target groups involved in relation to environmental problems, the causes leading to it, the role of each one of us in protecting it, possible solutions and

good practices from around the world, exchange of experience and knowledge from different organisations, learning about diversity and increasing understanding of EU policy;

- improving dialogue and cooperation at local and national level, discussing and understanding problems and obstacles faced by individual communities and discussing options for implementing different measures to help reduce the use of harmful appliances and sources of pollution;

- increase the knowledge of individuals about the importance of taking measures and reducing negative impacts on nature;

- helped to inform and familiarise citizens with EU policies in the field, introducing different perspectives, experiences and good practices.

All this, in turn, has improved their understanding of the nature of the European Union and helped to reduce Euroscepticism.

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Deliverables for Project

Deliverables												
Work Package No	Deliverable Related No	Deliverable No	Deliverable Name	Description	Lead Beneficiary	Type	Dissemination Level	Due Date	New Due Date (if delay)	Delivery Date	Approval Date	Status
WP1	D1.1	D1	Conducted a 3-day	Conducting a 3-da	DEVNIA	R	PU	30 Nov 2022		12.10.2022		Finished