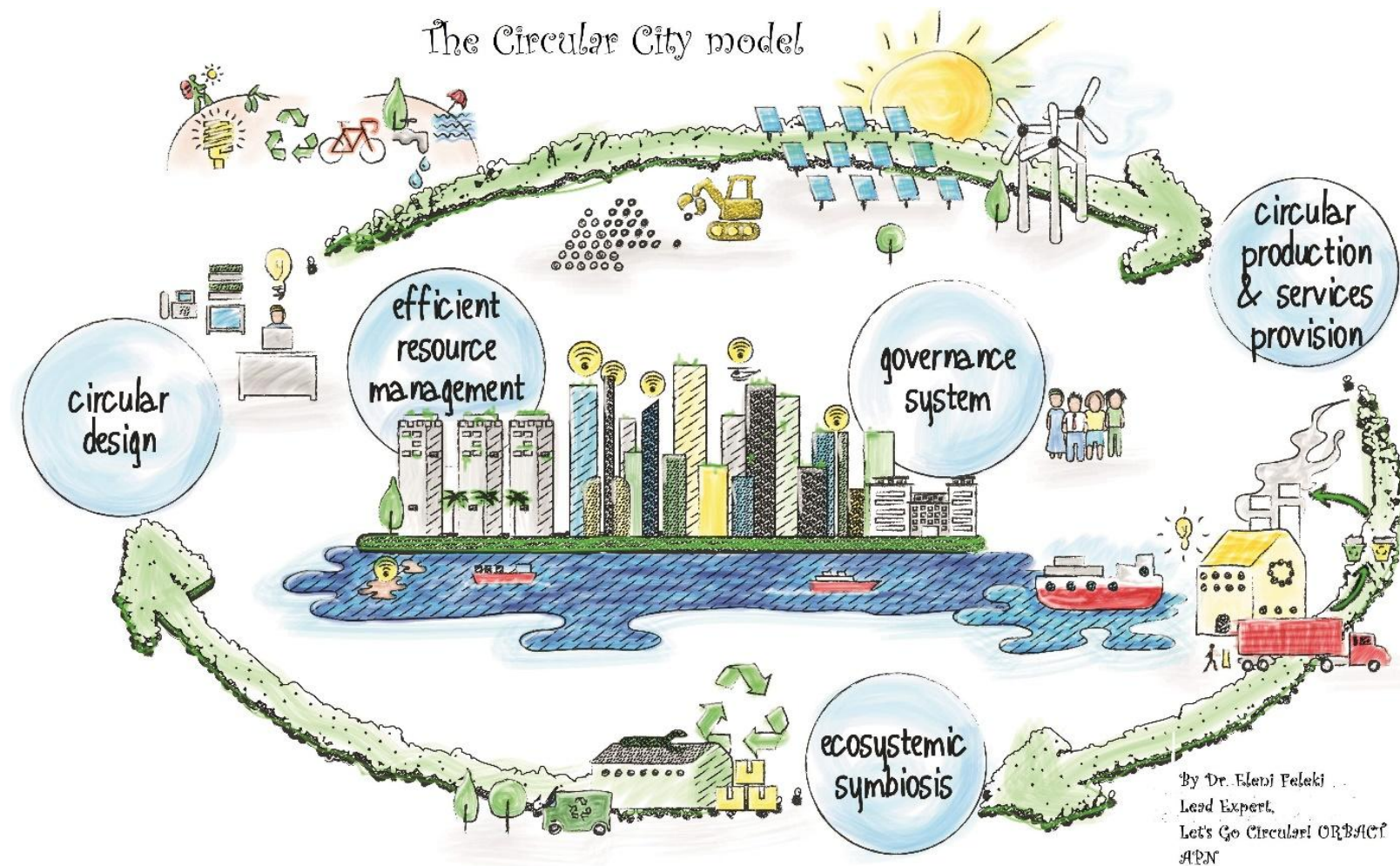


LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Paving the way for a circular transition of cities

Testing Actions to Pave Way for Circular Economy in Cities



URBACT



Co-funded by
the European Union
Interreg

The URBACT LET’S GO CIRCULAR! network wishes to express its gratitude to all the individuals and local stakeholders who have generously participated, giving precious inputs for this report.
Date: September 2025

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Paving the way

The potential of the circular economy to support sustainable cities still needs to be unlocked and the “LET’S GO CIRCULAR! – Paving the way for a circular transition of cities”, funded by the URBACT programme aims to act towards this direction. With Munich as lead partner, the cities that compose the network, met in the frame of the Let’s Get Started! Transnational meeting 25-27 September hosted by Munich and shaped a common understanding on the role they can play in boosting circularity in their areas and beyond. The synthesis of the discussions is illustrated above.

Cities serve as dynamic test beds for experimentations, where actions can be tripled, evaluated and scaled leading to innovative policies for all”

About the Network

The LET’S GO CIRCULAR! partners bring in different prerequisites and pilots, ranging from waste management to sustainable tourism. The transnational cooperation of ten cities listed below will result in a deeper understanding as well as new insights and experiences to be shared on local and EU level.

Jointly, the partner cities discuss the crucial elements of Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) following an agreed methodology for their elaboration. Each city (with their ULG) will develop such an IAP as a substantial and committing lead document for city leaders and also the public to understand and tackle the necessary policy change towards Circular Economy.

About the Testing Actions

Across the LET’S GO CIRCULAR! network, the ten participating cities have acted as testing grounds for innovative approaches to circular economy, piloting 16 testing actions that demonstrate both the diversity of challenges faced and the creativity of responses developed. These actions, ranging from awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to systemic interventions in procurement, construction, and mobility, have generated practical insights that are now shaping each city’s Integrated Action Plan (IAP).

Together, the 16 testing actions that were held illustrate the breadth of circular economy experimentation across European cities. While some focus on raising awareness and shifting behavior, others introduce structural changes in procurement, waste management, mobility, and business ecosystems. Most importantly, each action has generated lessons that are directly informing the development of Integrated Action Plans, ensuring that the pilots are not isolated experiments but stepping-stones towards systemic transformation.

Introduction to the testing actions

In Cluj-Napoca, the journey began with a Metropolitan Caravan. This travelling set of workshops and debates brought citizens, businesses, and local authorities together to learn, question, and share ideas about waste, resources, and sustainable lifestyles. It proved that knowledge grows fastest when people meet face to face — and the lessons gathered are now feeding into the city’s plans across three metropolitan communes.

Corfu turned its attention to children, asking: what do the youngest citizens know about circularity? Through a Circular Economy Questionnaire, nearly 360 primary school pupils revealed not only a strong understanding of the “reduce, reuse, recycle” principles but also a contagious enthusiasm to teach their parents. For Corfu, this was a powerful reminder that students can be ambassadors of change, carrying circular habits from the classroom into family homes and communities.

In Guimarães, the spotlight fell on textiles. With hardly any local system for textile collection, most clothing ended up in the bin. The city piloted a network of containers, gathering four tons of textiles in a few short months, and paired this with awareness campaigns in schools and public lectures. The initiative showed how infrastructure and education together can transform habits — and how a small pilot can spark a broader citywide strategy.

Meanwhile, Lisbon decided not to limit itself to one experiment — it launched four. Through the Circular Pass, the city tested how tourists could be guided toward sustainable businesses. A Circular Construction Talk brought builders, architects, and innovators into the same room to share practices already transforming the sector. With Textile Fashion Day, Lisbon citizens picked up needles, patches, and creativity to repair and upcycle clothes — and conversations began about creating a textile materials bank. Finally, the Circular Neighborhoods pilot mapped local businesses offering circular services, a first step toward a digital platform that connects residents with sustainable choices just around the corner. Together, these four actions showed that circularity can touch tourism, construction, fashion, and local economies in ways that are practical and attractive.

In Malmö, the experiment focused on something familiar to everyone — takeaway food. Could a shared system of reusable packaging replace the mountains of single-use boxes? The pilot, hosted on the city’s Resource Hub platform, began building dialogues between businesses and providers. Although still in its early phase, Malmö’s work is already showing how circular transitions are accelerated when municipalities act as conveners and facilitators.

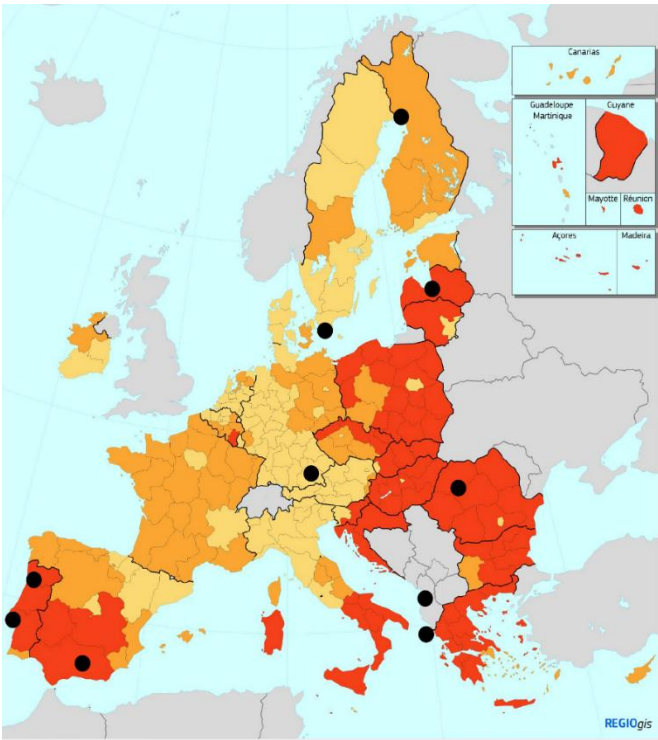
Munich looked inward at its own operations. Using the historic Villa Stuck museum as a testbed, the city developed a procurement guideline for canteens and restaurants that puts circularity at the heart of tenders. From furniture choices to catering operations, the pilot created a concrete model for embedding circular principles in public procurement — one that can be scaled up to influence the city’s many municipal restaurants.

Oulu staged two ambitious events. At the Circular Economy Arena, part of a major industrial fair, more than 20 organizations showcased solutions and research to new audiences, forging valuable connections. Then, during Biochar Day, businesses and researchers explored innovative uses of biochar, from soil enrichment to capturing nutrients from stormwater. Both actions underlined the power of bringing people together to spark new ideas — and confirmed Oulu’s role as a hub of northern innovation.

In Riga, the approach was intimate and practical: families were invited to build their own modular sorting furniture. These hands-on workshops didn’t just create waste-sorting stations; they created joy, pride, and new habits at home. Through social media outreach, the pilot also inspired many more families, proving that small-scale, do-it-yourself actions can turn abstract policy goals into something tangible.

Tirana experimented with both business support and event management. Through its Green Grants scheme, dozens of small companies working on reuse were given funding and visibility — from fashion brands to repair services. At the same time, the city piloted a Green Event where reusable cups and plates replaced single-use packaging, supported by mobile dishwashers. The waste avoided was measured, and citizens embraced the change. Now, Tirana is preparing to make reuse mandatory at all public events, turning a one-off pilot into a citywide standard.

Finally, Granada combined circularity with culture and mobility. An Open-Air Festival during European Mobility Week transformed central streets into car-free spaces filled with recycling workshops, repair stations, and upcycling activities, attracting over 1,500 people and thousands more online. At the same time, the Bike Hospital gave a second life to 150 impounded bicycles, refurbished by vocational students and integrated into a bike-sharing system. The initiative reduced waste, cut emissions, and gave young people real-world circular economy skills — a win-win for both the environment and education.



The LET’S GO CIRCULAR! partnership

- **Munich (DE), Lead Partner**
- **Lisbon (PT)**
- **Malmö (SE)**
- **Cluj (RO)**
- **Corfu (GR)**
- **Guimaraes (PT)**
- **Granada (ES)**
- **Riga (LV)**
- **Oulu (FI)**
- **Tirana (AL)**

Investment for jobs and growth goal (ERDF and ESF+) eligibility, 2021-2027

Categories of regions

- Less developed regions (GDP/head (PPS) less than 75% of the EU-27 average)
- Transition regions (GDP/head (PPS) between 75% and 100% of the EU-27 average)
- More developed regions (GDP/head (PPS) above 100% of the EU-27 average)



Image: The city of Cluj-Napoca. Source: Bing photos



Cluj-Napoca

1. Cluj-Napoca

1.1 Metropolitan Caravan

The challenge

To enhance the knowledge and interest of citizens from four major communes within the metropolitan area of Cluj regarding the principles and practices of the circular economy. This initiative aims to foster community engagement, drive sustainable practices, and stimulate discussions among residents, businesses, and local authorities.

The background

It is believed that raising community awareness leads to the best results, namely the strengthened knowledge of citizens, companies, and local administrations.

The testing scope

The testing action seeks to answer a central question: Can citizens' knowledge of the circular economy be effectively increased through targeted training sessions, interactive workshops, and open debates?

Description of the testing action

The "Metropolitan Caravan" is a series of interactive events focusing on sustainability, with an emphasis on circular economy principles. Four main "stops" (events) will be organized, each containing distinct components such as meetings, training sessions, workshops, and debates.

The community members are invited to actively participate through presentations, success stories, and expectation-setting for the training sessions. Expert-led discussions cover topics such as waste reduction, resource efficiency, eco-design, and sustainable consumption. In parallel, sessions of debates, Q&A with experts, and brainstorming activities are organized to encourage dialogue on local challenges and opportunities.

The first caravan took place on 18–19 December 2024 in the commune of Florești, marking the launch of this participatory testing action.

Monitoring

To assess the effectiveness of the Metropolitan Caravan, two complementary monitoring tools were applied. First, knowledge testing, by using interactive "Menti" questionnaires, was carried out through surveys and quizzes which were completed before the first and after the final stop. Second, targeted feedback was collected from participants, with specific questions designed to capture their understanding of how circular economy principles could be implemented in practice.

Results

The primary results were gathered through the Menti questionnaire, which provided direct feedback from participants. This feedback serves as the first indicator of the Caravan's impact on raising awareness and strengthening knowledge across the metropolitan communes.

Learning points

The testing action highlighted the importance of public events as an effective means to inform and engage the community. Beyond the knowledge shared, the gatherings created opportunities for networking among diverse stakeholders. This exchange of ideas and perspectives enriched the discussion, demonstrating how collaboration between citizens, businesses, and local authorities can generate new approaches to advancing the circular economy.

Iteration actions

Future editions of the Metropolitan Caravan will pay closer attention to timing and location. By selecting the most suitable periods of the year and hosting activities in well-chosen public spaces, the organizers aim to maximize participation and ensure that as many community members as possible can be actively involved.

Impact on the IAP

Building on the outcomes of the Metropolitan Caravan, ideas emerging from the process will be piloted in three different communes of the metropolitan area, ensuring that the lessons learned from the Caravan are translated into practical actions within the Integrated Action Plan.



Image: First Metropolitan Caravan held in the commune of Florești. Source: Cluj-Napoca, LGC partner



Image: First Metropolitan Caravan held in the commune of Florești. Source: Cluj-Napoca, LGC partner

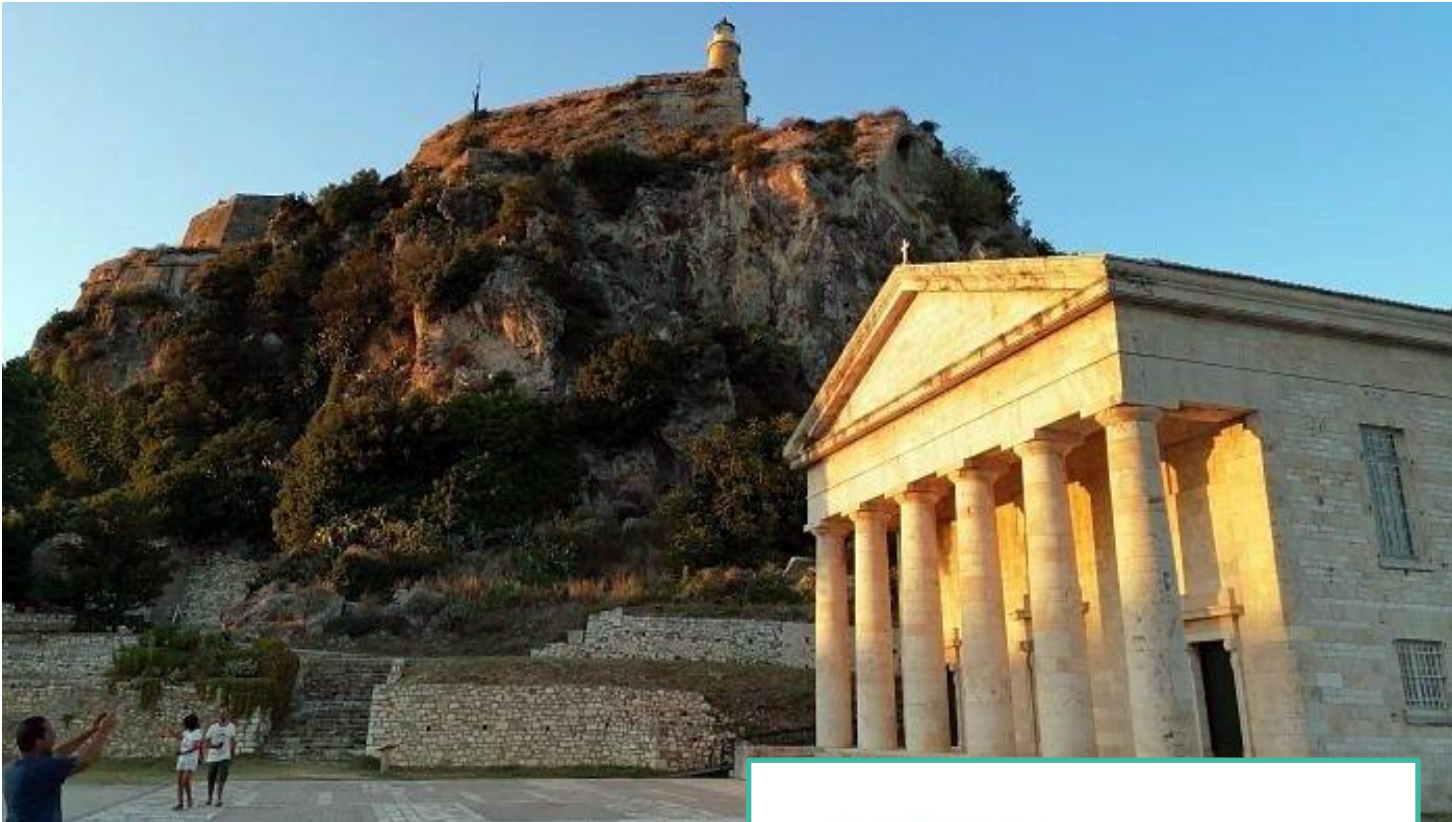


Image: The city of Corfu. Source: Bing photos



2. Corfu

2.1 CE Questionnaire

The challenge

One of the key challenges within the Integrated Action Plan towards a circular economy for the Municipality of Central Corfu and the Diapontia Islands is raising awareness and fostering environmental education among primary school pupils. Encouraging young students to understand concepts such as reuse, recycling, and responsible consumption is essential for shaping long-term sustainable behaviors.

However, instilling these values requires the development of engaging, age-appropriate educational programs, interactive activities, and collaboration between schools, teachers, and local stakeholders. By building awareness from an early age, the plan aims to cultivate a new generation of environmentally conscious citizens who will actively contribute to the transition towards a circular economy in their communities.

The background

It is believed that collecting and possessing data on primary school students' level of understanding of circular economy would be a powerful tool for designing and implementing a locally engaging circular economy program.

The testing scope

This testing action seeks to explore how children perceive and understand the various aspects of the circular economy. Do they truly grasp what circular economy means, and how easily do they envision its implementation in daily life?

Description of the testing action

The basic tool to verify the research question was a Circular Economy Questionnaire. The pilot action was implemented during the event that Kapodistriaki Development SA held in February 2025 in an urban space inside the city limits that is proposed to be regenerated in the context of URBACT the network "Re-Gen".

More specifically, a "circular economy station" was installed where each class of the schools gathered there, came along with their teacher, to talk about the questionnaire. Students' answers were written down by the project coordinator. There were 5 schools from the primary education.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of the Circular Economy Questionnaire was monitored through several indicators. First, the total number of classes completing the questionnaire was recorded, alongside the percentage of responses that were fully completed and valid for analysis.

The evaluation also considered the average score achieved per class, providing a measure of pupils' understanding of circular economy principles. Finally, results were categorized according to predefined scoring criteria, leading to the identification of classes that demonstrate a basic, intermediate, or advanced level of comprehension.

Results

The testing action engaged 20 classes from five primary schools, reaching almost 360 students in total. Remarkably, 100% of the questionnaires were fully completed and valid for analysis, providing a reliable dataset. Using a five-point scale (1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, 5 = very high), the average total score across all participating classes was 4, indicating a high level of understanding of circular economy principles among pupils.

Beyond the scores, the results also revealed strong enthusiasm, as students expressed a genuine willingness to participate. They, also, showed eagerness to involve their parents in adopting circular economy practices.

Learning points

The Circular Economy Questionnaire demonstrated that primary school students can effectively grasp and apply sustainability concepts when supported by engaging teaching methods and materials. Pupils showed a clear understanding of the "reduce, reuse, recycle" principles and could explain how these apply in age-appropriate, practical contexts.

An important outcome was the recognition of students' potential as ambassadors, capable of influencing classmates, families, and the wider community by sharing what they learned. The high average scores also indicate that pupils are ready to progress to more advanced sustainability topics and projects.

For educators, the results validated their teaching approaches and highlighted opportunities for expansion and scaling. Schools can build on this strong knowledge base by developing circular economy projects, initiatives, or extracurricular activities, thereby enhancing learning and broadening impact across the educational community.



Image: An activity organized at the "circular economy station" of an event held by Kapodistriaki Development SA. Source: Corfu, LGC partner



Image: An activity organized at the "circular economy station" of an event held by Kapodistriaki Development SA. Source: Corfu, LGC partner

Iteration actions

Future iteration actions will place greater emphasis on support and learning. Students with lower or moderate understanding will receive tailored exercises and small-group activities, while those demonstrating higher levels of understanding will be encouraged to act as peer mentors, deepening their own learning while supporting classmates.

Hands-on projects, experiments, and simulations will be introduced to connect circular economy concepts with real-world scenarios, making the learning process more tangible and impactful. At the same time, teachers will benefit from professional development opportunities focused on effective approaches to teaching circular economy principles.

Finally, families and local communities will be invited to participate in sustainability projects, ensuring that awareness can be raised outside school.

Impact on the IAP

Results will be shared with teachers to help them adapt their methods and address weaker areas, while classes with higher levels of understanding will be encouraged to take on peer mentoring or leadership roles.

Additionally, workshops, projects, and competitions that allow students to apply their knowledge in creative and practical ways are going to be organized. A second round of questionnaires or quizzes will be introduced to measure progress over time.

To sustain motivation, students' work will be showcased publicly, raising awareness within schools and the wider community. Given the positive outcomes, the programme is also expected to expand to additional grades and schools.



Image: An activity organized at the "circular economy station" of an event held by Kapodistriaki Development SA.
Source: Corfu, LGC partner



Image: The city of Guimarães. Source: Bing photos



Guimarães

3. Guimarães

3.1 Textile Waste Management

The challenge

In Guimarães, one of the main challenges identified for advancing the goals of the circular economy was the management of textile waste. Despite the growing awareness of the environmental impact caused by the disposal of clothing and household textiles, the city lacked a structured system for the collection and redirection of these materials. It was found that there were no dedicated collection points and no effective municipal system to facilitate the proper routing of textile waste. This infrastructural gap was further exacerbated by a low level of public awareness, resulting in poor adherence to separation and reuse practices. Without accessible drop-off locations and effective communication campaigns, textile waste continued to be treated as mixed garbage, compromising broader sustainability objectives.

The background

It is believed that a simple, intuitive, educational, effective, and efficient collection system can change the paradigm of textile collection in the region.

The testing scope

This testing action pursues to answer a central question: What effect can a collection system, supported by strong awareness and educational components, have in driving a paradigm shift in textile waste management?

Description of the testing action

Dedicated containers will be distributed across selected areas, supported by free waste collection services to make textile disposal accessible and convenient. Alongside this, educational communication materials will be developed to explain the importance of proper textile management, while awareness activities will actively involve students, teachers, and school staff. To broaden the impact, lectures and community events will also be organized, creating opportunities for the wider public to learn about the environmental and social value of textile reuse and recycling.



Image: A pilot action of textile content delivery and awareness raising.
Source: Guimarães, LGC partner

Monitoring

Success will be measured through a set of output indicators. These include the number of containers distributed, the total volume of textile waste collected, and participation rates in awareness activities and community lectures. In addition, feedback will be gathered from students, school staff, and community members to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative and the level of engagement it generated.

Results

The pilot action delivered tangible results across multiple fronts. More than 80 containers were distributed, enabling the collection of approximately 4 tons of post-consumer textiles from schools, with a further 7 collection rounds completed since the initial count.

Furthermore, over 30 awareness sessions were organized in schools, directly engaging pupils, teachers, and staff. In addition, 4 public lectures were delivered by key stakeholders, focusing on the circular economy of textiles and their wider social value. To extend the impact, dedicated social media campaigns were also launched, ensuring that the message reached a broader community audience.

Learning points

It was confirmed that engaging schools and the wider community is crucial for raising awareness and driving participation in textile collection. Additionally, providing free and accessible containers proved highly effective in encouraging citizens to separate and dispose of textiles responsibly. At the same time, regular communication and awareness activities helped sustain momentum and keep interest levels high. Finally, the active involvement of stakeholders, through public lectures and community discussions, added credibility, enriched the public's understanding of circular economy principles and strengthened the social value of textile reuse.

Iteration actions

To improve future outcomes, communication strategies will be refined and tailored to different audiences, the frequency of awareness sessions will be increased, while new partnerships with additional schools and community organizations will be explored to broaden outreach. On the operational side, collection logistics will be optimized to guarantee timely pickups. More detailed feedback will also be gathered from participants, enabling the city to design targeted solutions that further enhance engagement and participation.

Impact on the IAP

The next steps will focus on integrating the pilot activities into a broader action plan. Efforts will be made for securing additional funding sources to expand the project, strengthening partnerships with schools and community organizations, refining data collection and monitoring methods, and planning for a wider rollout based on the pilot's outcomes and lessons learned.



Image: The city of Lisbon. Source: Bing photos



Lisboa

4. Lisbon

4.1 Circular Shift

The challenge

A central challenge that Lisbon faces is to explore initiatives that can guide tourism activity towards more sustainable and circular practices.

The background

It is believed that providing and promoting local activities linked to circular tourism could generate interest among city visitors in more sustainable activities.

The testing scope

This testing action aims to examine whether introducing a dedicated pass that promotes partnerships with sustainable and circular tourism providers can strengthen new local businesses.

Description of the testing action

To pilot the concept, a Circular Pass prototype was developed in partnership with the Circular Shift Association.

Monitoring

During this pilot development phase, monitoring focused on a single indicator: the number of businesses that could potentially integrate their services into the offer provided by the Circular Pass.

Results

The initial survey revealed a promising level of interest from local businesses in joining the Circular Pass initiative. Approximately, 50 potential partners expressed their willingness to participate.

Learning points

The pilot confirmed that there is clear potential for making the Circular Pass available as a tool to promote sustainable tourism activities. In addition, presentations of the concept generated interest from the organizations responsible for tourism in Lisbon and at the national level in Portugal, who expressed willingness to coordinate efforts with similar initiatives they are developing.

Iteration actions

The focus will remain on continuing to identify and engage additional businesses that can be integrated into the Circular Pass offer, expanding the diversity and appeal of the initiative. At the same time, efforts will be directed towards developing formal partnerships with local and national public bodies.

Impact on the IAP

The next phase will involve searching for funding sources to secure the viability of the Circular Pass and assessing the feasibility of integrating it into a broader circularity project for the city.



Image: Local action group members at an event during Green Week. Source: Guimarães, LGC partner



Image: Circular Construction Talk during Unicorn Week 2024. Source: Lisbon, LGC partner



Image: Circular Construction Talk during Unicorn Week 2024. Source: Lisbon, LGC partner

These include the integration of circularity principles into architectural projects, the use of Building Information Modelling (BIM) tools, the development of new sustainable construction materials, and the direct reintroduction of construction waste into rehabilitation processes in public spaces. Together, these areas represent concrete opportunities for advancing circular practices within the construction sector.

Learning points

The pilot action showed that a number of existing initiatives in the construction sector can already be replicated and scaled, offering real potential to increase the levels of circularity in the city's building activities. It also demonstrated the value of creating spaces for dialogue, as new and fruitful ideas emerged by bringing together diverse stakeholders.

Iteration actions

The format proved to be successful and will serve as inspiration for future engagement processes. In particular, the experience will inform the design of stakeholder involvement activities for the upcoming initiative to establish a building materials bank in Lisbon.

Impact on the IAP

The approach tested will be directly applied to engage stakeholders in the forthcoming Construction Materials Bank initiative. Beyond this, the model will also be adapted for use in other areas of the Integrated Action Plan, particularly actions linked to education and training.

4.2 Circular Construction Talk

The challenge

A key challenge in the city of Lisbon identified is to assess the level of interest within the local ecosystem in developing partnerships around circularity activities in the construction sector.

The background

It is believed that a wide range of good practices and experiences are beginning to emerge across different links of the construction value chain. If identified and shared, these practices can be replicated and scaled, creating measurable impact in the city.

The testing scope

This testing action sets out to assess whether investing in good practices within the construction sector can generate a measurable impact on the city's circularity levels and contribute to the broader decarbonization process.

Description of the testing action

During Unicorn Week 2024, on May 16, people from a wide range of sectors from the construction industry were invited to discuss the current state of sustainable construction, exchange perspectives on challenges and opportunities, and showcase good practices already in operation within the city.

Monitoring

The level of community interest was assessed primarily through participation. The number of attendees and the diversity of stakeholders present served as key indicators.

Results

The discussions between speakers and participants highlighted several areas with strong potential to be scaled up in order to generate impact.



Image: Circular Construction Talk during Unicorn Week 2024. Source: Lisbon, LGC partner



Image: A series of workshops and talks about the circularity of the textile industry, organized on 7 December 2024.
Source: Lisbon, LGC partner

Furthermore, interest was expressed in transforming this type of initiative into a regular event, demonstrating its relevance and potential for continuity. Discussions also highlighted the idea of creating a textile bank that could serve the entrepreneurial community as a resource for reuse and innovation.

Learning points

The pilot action showed that a number of existing initiatives in the textile industry can already be replicated and scaled, offering real potential to increase the levels of circularity in the city's clothes' consumption activities. It also demonstrated the value of creating spaces for dialogue, as new and fruitful ideas emerged by bringing together diverse stakeholders.

Iteration actions

The format proved to be successful and will serve as inspiration for future engagement in education and awareness raising initiatives.

Impact on the IAP

These types of initiatives will also be integrated into broader actions focused on education, awareness, and capacity building. In addition, the city will begin the operationalization of a textile material bank, creating a practical resource to support reuse, repair, and entrepreneurial innovation in the fashion sector.



Image: Workshop on clothes' repairing & upcycling.
Source: Lisbon, LGC partner

4.3 Textile Fashion Day

The challenge

Another challenge that is recognized in the city is to encourage sustainable consumption practices, reuse, and repair in the textile and fashion sector among the population. The sector is one of the most resource-intensive and environmentally damaging industries, with high levels of waste generation.

The background

It is believed that the presentation of alternatives to fast fashion and ways on how to repair and transform, could reduce the consumption of new clothes.

The testing scope

This pilot action explores whether offering alternatives to conventional new clothing stores and investing in learning how to repair and upcycle could contribute to reducing first-hand clothing consumption and extending the life of textiles.

Description of the testing action

At the beginning of the Christmas season, on 7 December 2024, a series of workshops on repairing and upcycling of clothes was organized. In parallel, two conversations were held: one on the current state of implementing the textile recycling model in Lisbon and calculating the environmental footprint of clothes and the other one on the new businesses developed by the city's entrepreneurial community.

Monitoring

The level of community interest was assessed primarily through participation. The number of attendees and the diversity of stakeholders present served as key indicators.

Results

In terms of participation, around 10 people took part in the two practical workshops focused on repair and upcycling, while approximately 40 attendees joined the two public talks organized.



Image: A discussion on recycling and the environmental footprint of clothes. Source: Lisbon, LGC partner

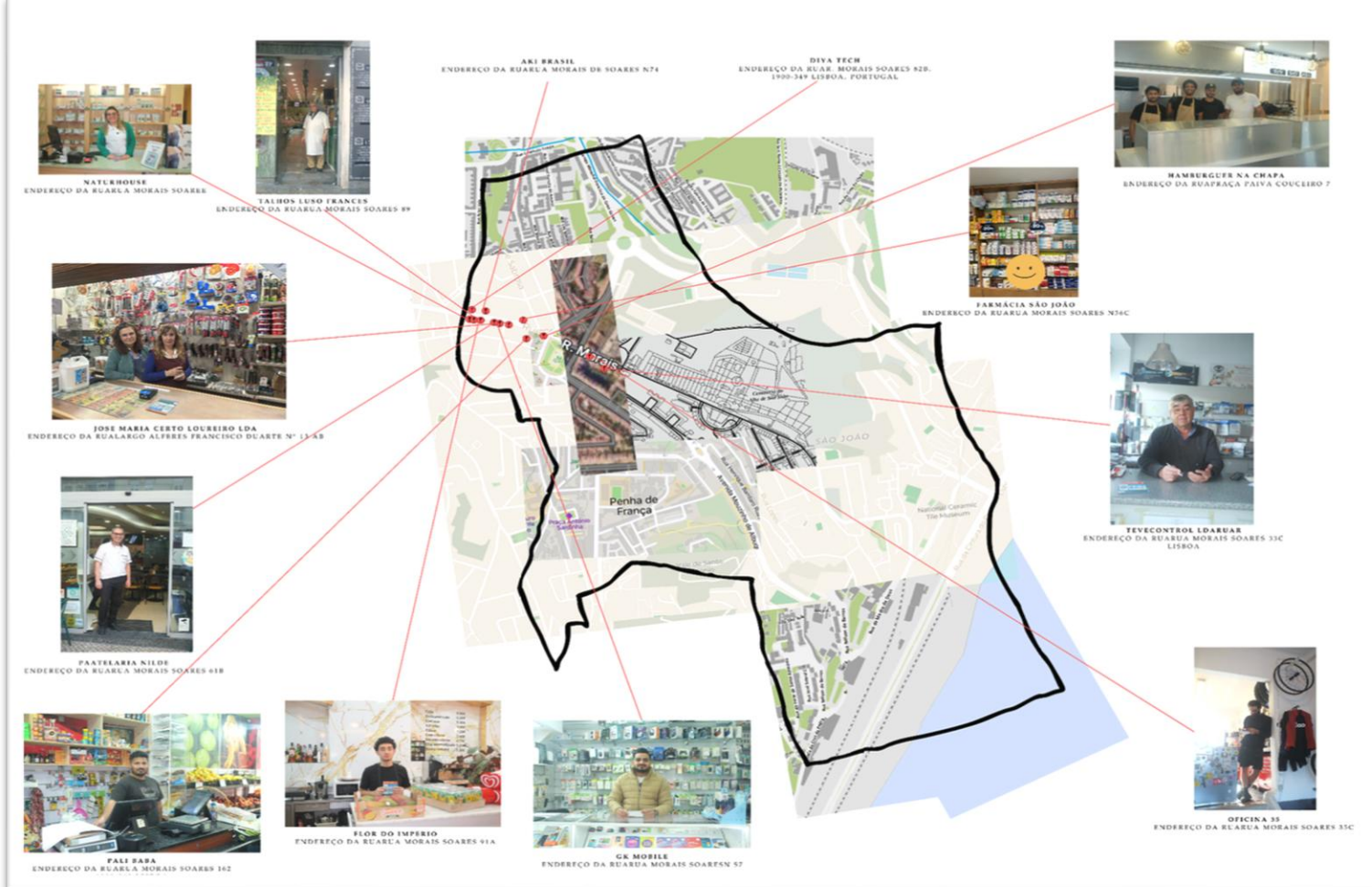


Image: A mapping example of potential local circular businesses in the Bairro da Penha de França neighborhood.
Source: Proximity Economy Platform Report, Lisbon, LGC partner

4.4 Circular Neighborhoods

The challenge

One more challenge identified is to promote the creation of a digital tool or webpage that highlights sustainable and circular local businesses across Lisbon's neighborhoods. Providing an accessible platform to showcase these businesses can help connect them with residents and visitors, stimulate demand for sustainable products and services, and strengthen the local circular ecosystem.

The background

It is believed that there is a large group of people who do not opt for repair and second-hand purchasing opportunities because they are not aware of the options available in their neighborhood.

The testing scope

This pilot action seeks to examine if the existence of a robust tool on circular businesses and initiatives in the city's neighborhoods could increase sustainable purchasing behavior, utilization of repairing opportunities and prevention of waste production.

Description of the testing action

From October to December 2024, with the support of a group of students from a Danish pilot training program, named Kaos, existing circular businesses promoting tools, as well as their design criteria were explored. This exploratory phase provided the groundwork for shaping a tool that is practical and responsive to community needs.

Monitoring

The monitoring process focused on identifying the types of tools that already exist, assessing their current level of use, and evaluating the interest of local traders in participating in the development of a new platform. These indicators provided insights into the feasibility of the proposed tool and the willingness of businesses to engage with it.

Results

A strong interest among local traders in contributing to the development of the tool was revealed.

In addition, a significant number of businesses in the analyzed neighborhood of Bairro da Penha de França were identified as meeting circular economy criteria, providing a solid foundation for the platform's future content and relevance.

Learning points

The testing action highlighted the importance of establishing a systematic method for collecting and updating information on local businesses. This is a critical factor for the success of the tool, yet it also presents a challenge, as Portugal's adoption of the "Zero Licensing" process means there is no official database of traders to rely on.

Another conclusion was that existing tools already in use can be adapted and updated to serve the intended purpose, offering a practical starting point for developing the new platform.

Iteration actions

Future iterations will focus on refining the criteria used to define what constitutes a "Circular Neighborhood," ensuring clarity and consistency in identifying qualifying businesses and practices. In parallel, alternative methods for collecting and updating information will be explored, aiming to establish a reliable and sustainable process for maintaining an up-to-date database of participating traders.

Impact on the IAP

To address the challenges of surveying and information collection, the use of artificial intelligence support methods will be tested in collaboration with the scientific community. At the same time, efforts will focus on identifying funding sources and assessing the feasibility of integrating this initiative within a broader circularity project for the city.

Retail Businesses				
Waste Management	Always / Yes	Sometimes / Partly	Never / No	Points
Recycles plastic	☒	☐	☐	2
Recycles paper	☐	☒	☐	1
Recycles metal	☒	☐	☐	2
Recycles glass	☒	☐	☐	2
Tracks waste generated	☒	☐	☐	2
Recycle/donate unsold or damaged inventory?	☐	☒	☐	1
Packaging	Always / Yes	Sometimes / Partly	Never / No	Points
Use of plastic packaging	☒	☐	☐	0
Use of paper packaging	☐	☐	☒	0
Use of other biodegradable packaging	☐	☒	☐	1
Use of second hand packaging	☐	☒	☐	1
Energy	Always / Yes	Sometimes / Partly	Never / No	Points
Use of energy efficient lights (LED)	☒	☐	☐	2
Actively monitors and reduce energy consumption (through timers or energy audits)	☐	☐	☒	0
Product	Always / Yes	Sometimes / Partly	Never / No	Points
Stock second-hand or upcycled products	☒	☐	☐	2
Products sourced locally	☒	☐	☐	2
Prioritize selling products with eco-certifications	☐	☒	☐	1
Use suppliers with certificate of sustainability	☒	☐	☐	2
Workers and community	Yes	Sometimes	No	Points
Employees have a employment contract	☐	☐	☒	0
Hire locally to support the local economy	☒	☐	☐	2
A diverse representation of gender, age, and backgrounds within the workforce	☒	☐	☐	2
Total points available	38		>50%	Needs Improving
Points achieved	25		50-70%	Bronze
Grade	65.79%		70-85%	Silver
			85-100%	Gold

Image: An example of a circularity evaluation form, potentially filled by local businesses. Source: Proximity Economy Platform Report, Lisbon, LGC partner



Image: An example of verified certificates, classified in different tiers, and provided to the local businesses based on their circularity performance on the evaluation form. Source: Proximity Economy Platform Report, Lisbon, LGC partner



Image: The city of Malmö. Source: Bing photos



Malmö

5. Malmo

5.1 Reusable take-away packaging

The challenge

A key challenge is to determine how the municipality of Malmö can best contribute to the city's circular transition and how the city administration can leverage its role, resources, and partnerships to accelerate change and support systemic transformation across sectors.

The background

It is believed that by mobilizing stakeholders, guiding with knowledge, managing its own operations as a model, creating incentives, and enforcing regulation, the city can accelerate systemic change.

The testing scope

The testing action is guided by a central question: How can the municipality of Malmö most effectively support the circular transition?

Description of the testing action

As part of the Malmö Resource Hub - a platform designed to connect stakeholders, promote collaboration, and accelerate the city's circular transition - the municipality launched a pilot initiative to explore the feasibility of a shared system for reusable take-away packaging.

Businesses were invited to participate in a dialogue-based meeting if they either operated in areas with several take-away outlets, such as shopping centres, or provided solutions for supplying reusable packaging. The Resource Hub created the space for dialogue and coordination among these actors, allowing different perspectives to be shared and potential collaborations to be identified.

Monitoring

The monitoring system for Malmö Municipality could be structured around its main areas of focus, which also serve as indicators of progress. Attention is placed on how activities advance resource efficiency and on the extent to which resource coaching supports businesses in adopting more sustainable practices. The development of circular business models is followed as a sign of systemic change, while industrial symbiosis initiatives are observed as evidence of collaboration across sectors. Finally, relationships and trust between stakeholders are monitored as essential conditions for sustaining long-term circular transitions in the city.

Results

As the Malmö Resource Hub pilot on reusable take-away packaging is still in its early stages, final results are not yet available. However, the initiative has successfully initiated dialogue among local businesses and solution providers, laying the groundwork for a shared system. The process has already generated interest and engagement, which will be further assessed as the pilot develops.

Learning points

One important lesson from Malmö's experience is that Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) can function as agile tools to accelerate progress, even without formal political approval. While Malmö's IAP will not go through a political adoption process, it is part of the broader Climate Transition Process, which has been politically approved and supported.

Iteration actions

Building on the progress already made in areas such as resource coaching and circular business models, the city will continue to develop the platform as a central driver of its circular transition. With secured funding and dedicated partnerships in place until 2027, the municipality is well positioned to ensure continuous support for businesses and stakeholders engaged in the transition.

Impact on the IAP

The next steps for Malmö focus on coordinating focus dialogues with thematic URBACT Local Group meetings to further explore insights that can contribute to the city's overall circular strategy.



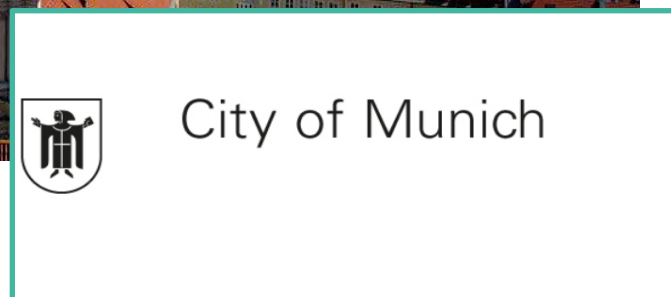
Image: Exploring the feasibility of a shared system for reusable take-away packaging in a dialogue-based meeting among businesses. Source: Malmö, LGC partner



Image: Exploring the feasibility of a shared system for reusable take-away packaging in a dialogue-based meeting among businesses. Source: Malmö, LGC partner



Image: The city of Munich. Source: Bing photos



6. Munich

6.1 Development of a procurement guideline for a circular canteen/restaurant

The challenge

Munich faces the challenge of integrating circular economy principles into the operation of the city's canteens and restaurants. Without clear guidance, opportunities to embed sustainability and circularity into the catering sector risk being lost.

The background

It is believed that the development of a dedicated guideline for circular canteens and restaurants, is expected to help the city face the challenge. By providing awarding authorities with clear criteria for leasing out municipal restaurants, sustainably procuring furniture, and improving circular use in catering operations, the full potential of procurement could be harnessed to advance Munich's circular transition.

The testing scope

The focus of the pilot action is on understanding which circular criteria are already available on the market. Additionally, it examines the key components that together define a circular canteen or restaurant, while also assessing the potential long-term cost savings such an approach could deliver compared to conventional operations.

The ultimate scope is to translate these findings into a practicable procurement guideline that can be applied to goods and services across the catering sector.

Description of the testing action

A procurement guideline for a circular canteen and restaurant will be developed using Villa Stuck - a historic museum and cultural venue in Munich with an associated café - as a concrete example. In cooperation with the Circular Munich association, the process will begin with identifying the specific needs of Villa Stuck and analyzing which catering industry processes can be made circular. Based on this, a tender will be drafted that is comprehensible, feasible, and has circular criteria integrated.

Circular Munich will accompany the entire tendering process, ensuring that the gained insights will be translated into a procurement guideline designed to support future tenders. The success of the circular tender will be evaluated at the end of the whole process.

Monitoring

The monitoring of the pilot action will be carried out on several levels. First, the products' life cycle costs will be calculated to provide an understanding of the long-term economic impact of circular procurement. In parallel, suppliers will be asked to evaluate how comprehensible and feasible the tender requirements are.

Monitoring will also focus on the number of suppliers participating and the extent to which they are able to meet the circular criteria. Finally, systematic feedback on the developed guideline will be recorded, ensuring that the process is assessed in terms of outputs and refined through the experiences and perspectives of those directly involved.

Results

The analysis revealed that demand units often require support in assessing their needs beyond traditional approaches. This step is critical, as it determines the direction of the procurement process and sets the level of sustainability and circularity that can be achieved. However, many demand units still lack awareness of existing market solutions, resulting in conventional, consumption-driven practices dominating procurement decisions.

The development of a clear guideline addresses this gap by providing orientation. It introduces the principles of the circular economy and translates them into solid requirements, creating transparency in the process and helping to challenge traditional purchasing habits.

Learning points

The pilot showed that demand units are genuinely interested in acting sustainably and in line with circular principles. At the same time, they need compact, easily accessible support and advice to navigate options, as well as occasionally unconventional questions that help them break out of established ways of thinking.

A coordinating entity adds clear value here, since it can scan market conditions, point to existing municipal resources, and offer access to networking and synergies opportunities. Equally important is to avoid overwhelming teams with changes. Progress is greatest when solutions are presented step by step, focusing on targeted adjustments rather than attempting a full system transformation at once.

Iteration actions

Workshops with municipal stakeholders revealed the need for a digital, AI-supported competence centre to act as the first point of contact for every procurement process aiming at sustainability. Such a hub would provide knowledge, ready-to-use text modules, and guide demand units by asking the right questions to define their needs more precisely.

In parallel, Munich plans to initiate product-specific market dialogues. These exchanges will allow the city to communicate its sustainability standards early on, giving suppliers the chance to adapt, co-develop solutions, and align their offerings with circular and sustainable procurement requirements.

Impact on the IAP

The pilot action at Villa Stuck will serve as a reference model for circular gastronomy procurement. The insights gained can be scaled up to inform other municipal canteens and restaurants, ensuring that circular criteria become embedded in future tenders.



Image: The associated café inside Villa Stuck, Munich. Source: Bing photos



The challenge

Many businesses remain unaware of the resources, infrastructure, and collaborations already present in their local ecosystem. A key challenge that the city of Oulu faces is to inform companies about the opportunities offered by the circular economy cluster and, within this context, raise awareness of the research facilities and laboratories available to them, as well as new companies active in this field.

The background

It is believed that by introducing laboratories and companies to potential future partners within the circular economy cluster, valuable relationships can be promoted.

The testing scope

The pilot is framed around the question of whether large-scale industry events can serve as effective platforms to raise awareness of the circular economy cluster.

Description of the testing action

The initiative was implemented through Kiertotalous Areena (Circular Economy Arena) at the Northern Industry Biennale, held on 22–23 May 2024. A joint department was established within the trade fair, bringing together up to 20 organizations and companies. These included research facilities and service providers, as well as small circular businesses for whom this was the first opportunity to showcase their work at such a large-scale industry event.

Monitoring

During the planning stage, discussions with stakeholders helped to assess whether the concept of a joint department was considered valuable. At the event itself, the level of interest among attendees was observed and informal interviews were conducted to capture immediate impressions. After the summit, a satisfaction survey using the “Lyyti” tool was distributed, providing structured feedback from participants on the effectiveness and relevance of the initiative.

Results

All organizations invited to join accepted the offer, and the available slots were quickly filled. During the summit, participating presenters reported satisfaction, noting that the event had enabled them to establish new partnerships and engage in meaningful conversations.

Feedback collected through the Lyyti survey further reinforced these impressions. Respondents highlighted the quality of contacts made and the strong location with comments such as “Good contacts, good location” and “Well organized, everything worked.” On a five-point scale, the ratings included three scores of 4 and seven scores of 5, reflecting an overall high level of satisfaction.

Learning points

The experience confirmed that nothing compares to the value of live conversations in building connections and collaborations. However, while circular economy is increasingly recognized as part of the northern industry landscape, there is still considerable work ahead for it to be adopted more deeply. Furthermore, the two themes chosen for the joint department were well received, proving suitable and complementary.

Listening closely to the network also generated new ideas for future initiatives, reinforcing the importance of dialogue. Overall, the pilot action was seen as a worthwhile investment, delivering tangible value for participants and strengthening the visibility of circular economy in the industrial context.

7.2 Biochar Day

The challenge

Exploring how biochar can be more effectively integrated into Oulu’s circular transition is one of the city’s challenges.

The background

It is believed that new uses for biochar can be identified by bringing together diverse stakeholders to share perspectives and exchange ideas. Collaboration between researchers, companies, and public actors can reveal innovative applications.

The testing scope

Biochar can be effectively used across multiple applications to reduce the city’s carbon footprint and create long-term carbon sinks.

Description of the testing action

On 15 March 2024, Oulu organized a Biochar Day dedicated to exploring opportunities for cooperation and innovation around biochar. Companies, research institutes, and representatives from other cities were invited to share their ideas and experiences, presenting current applications and emerging possibilities.

Monitoring

The monitoring of the Biochar Day focused on capturing the quality and variety of new ideas generated during the group sessions, as well as gathering direct feedback from participants.

Iteration actions

Building on the success of the first experience, the Circular Economy Arena will be repeated at the Northern Industry Summit in 2026. The aim is to secure an even better location within the event to maximize visibility and engagement. In addition, new themes will be introduced to keep the concept dynamic.

Impact on the IAP

A similar joint department is planned for the 2026 Northern Industry Summit, with efforts directed at securing funding along with the cluster’s financing scheme.

Results

The Biochar Day generated a wide range of new ideas, including the potential to collect fertilizers from stormwater using biochar and later reuse them in growing soil. Participant feedback confirmed the relevance and value of the event. Comments gathered through the Lyyti survey reflected strong satisfaction, with ratings of two times 4 points and eleven times 5 points on a five-point scale, highlighting the quality of discussions and the usefulness of the knowledge shared.

Learning points

The Biochar Day showed that everyone involved gained new knowledge about the wide range of possibilities for using biochar. The event also proved the significance of bringing different stakeholders together.

Iteration actions

The positive experience of the Biochar Day confirmed the value of the concept. To build on this success, the event could be repeated on a regular basis, for example annually, providing an ongoing platform for stakeholders to exchange knowledge.

Impact on the IAP

Testing the environmental benefits and the feasibility of using biochar, by collecting fertilizers from stormwater and later applying the nutrient-enriched material in growing soil, could be part of a broader Integration Action Plan.



Image: The city of Riga. Source: Bing photos



Riga

8. Riga

8.1 Sorting furniture workshop series

The challenge

One of the aims of the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) is to actively engage residents and provide accessible infrastructure that supports participation in the circular economy. However, a key challenge lies in translating these policy-level goals, such as reducing household waste per capita and increasing recycling rates, into everyday actions by individuals and families. Many households in Riga remain disengaged or lack simple, tangible entry points that would allow them to participate meaningfully in waste separation and circular practices.

The background

It is believed that many residents avoid sorting waste due to perceived inconvenience or lack of awareness. Introducing an easy, engaging, and supported first step can increase their willingness to participate.

The testing scope

This pilot explores whether a simple, hands-on activity can act as an effective entry point into circular behavior. The idea is to test if building a modular sorting unit from freely available materials will motivate families to apply, participate, and adopt circular practices in their daily lives. At the same time, the action examines whether such engagement can be amplified through social media outreach.

Description of the testing action

The testing action consists of a series of workshops where families are invited to build their own sorting furniture using modular wooden components. All materials are provided free of charge, ensuring accessibility for participants. Promotion takes place through social media channels, with the dual aim of triggering direct applications from interested families and reaching a broader audience to spread awareness. The initiative brings together several stakeholders: REA as the organizer, participating families as end-users, social media audiences as multipliers, and workshop instructors to guide the hands-on process.

Monitoring

The monitoring of the pilot combines quantitative and qualitative indicators. Success is tracked through the number of applications received, the sorting units completed, and the level of engagement on social media, measured by reach, reactions, shares, and comments. Participant demographics, such as age group, household type, and location, are also recorded to understand who the initiative reaches.

Qualitative insights are gathered through a short questionnaire, asking participants why they applied, what they hoped to achieve, and whether the experience improved their waste sorting habits or awareness.

Results

The pilot reached more than 100 people through targeted social media promotion, generating nine applications. Additionally, two sorting units were successfully constructed during the workshops. The related posts received active interaction, with shares, reactions, and comments showing clear interest in the initiative. Beyond the numbers, participants demonstrated strong emotional engagement, as families joined together in the activity, and visible enjoyment and enthusiasm were observed throughout the sessions.

Learning points

Maintaining momentum and reaching new participants requires regular reposting and strong social media visibility. Trust and interest can be built more effectively by capturing and sharing the experiences of previous participants, while framing the value in terms of family life and home improvement proved more appealing than abstract sustainability messaging.

At the same time, the absence of a structured questionnaire limited the ability to fully understand participant motivations and barriers, pointing to a broader need for improved data collection in similar initiatives. Still, preliminary responses revealed diverse reasons for participation, including the desire to spend meaningful time as a family, an existing interest in sustainability, and the motivation to improve at-home waste sorting practices.

Iteration actions

Testimonials from current participants will be included in promotional materials to build trust and inspire new families to apply. To lower entry barriers, shorter drop-in sessions or pop-up workshops will be tested in schools and at local events, providing more flexible opportunities for engagement. In addition, the organizers plan to experiment with alternative formats to identify which approaches are most effective in motivating families to adopt circular practices at home.

Impact on the IAP

The activity demonstrates that the Integrated Action Plan's goals on citizen involvement in circular practices are realistic and achievable when supported by practical, well-framed interventions. The pilot will be expanded through partnerships with schools, youth centres, and community hubs. These collaborations will diversify the reach of the initiative and embed circular thinking at an early stage, ensuring that circularity habits extend across different parts of the community.

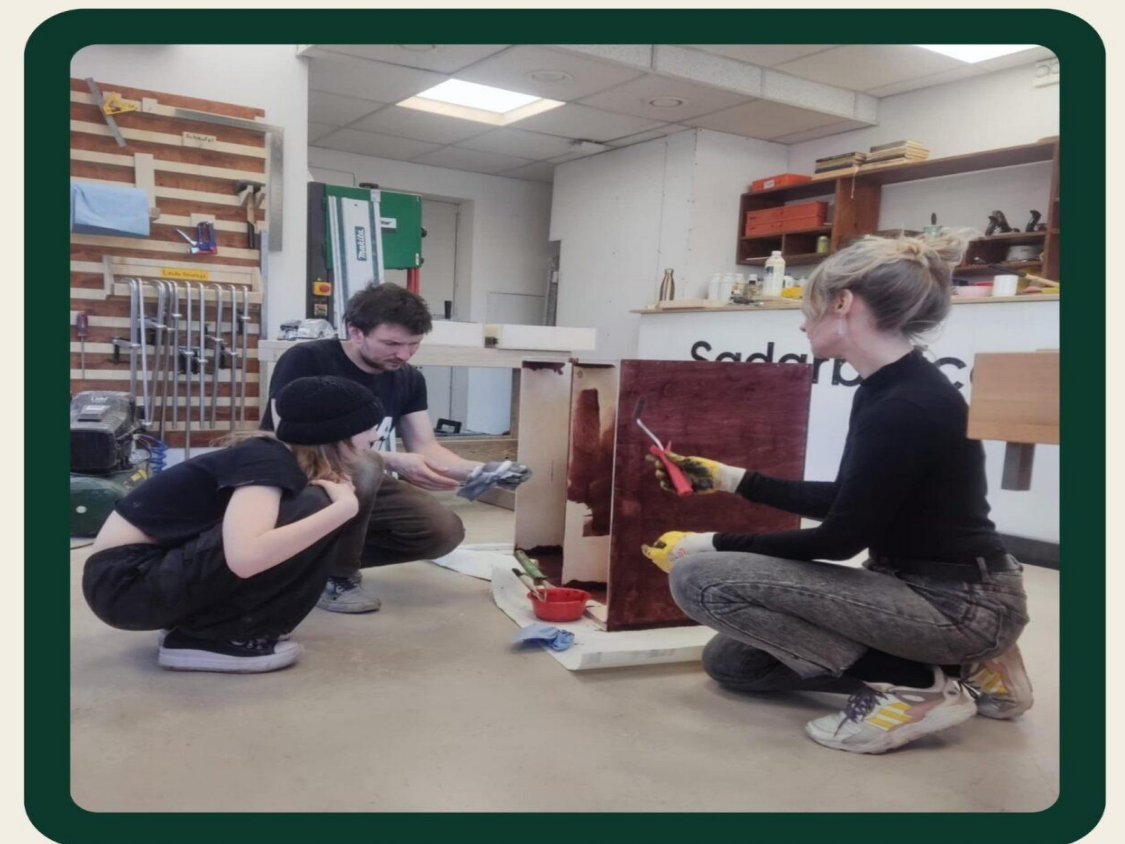


Image: A family building a sorting furniture using modular wooden components. Source: Riga, LGC partner

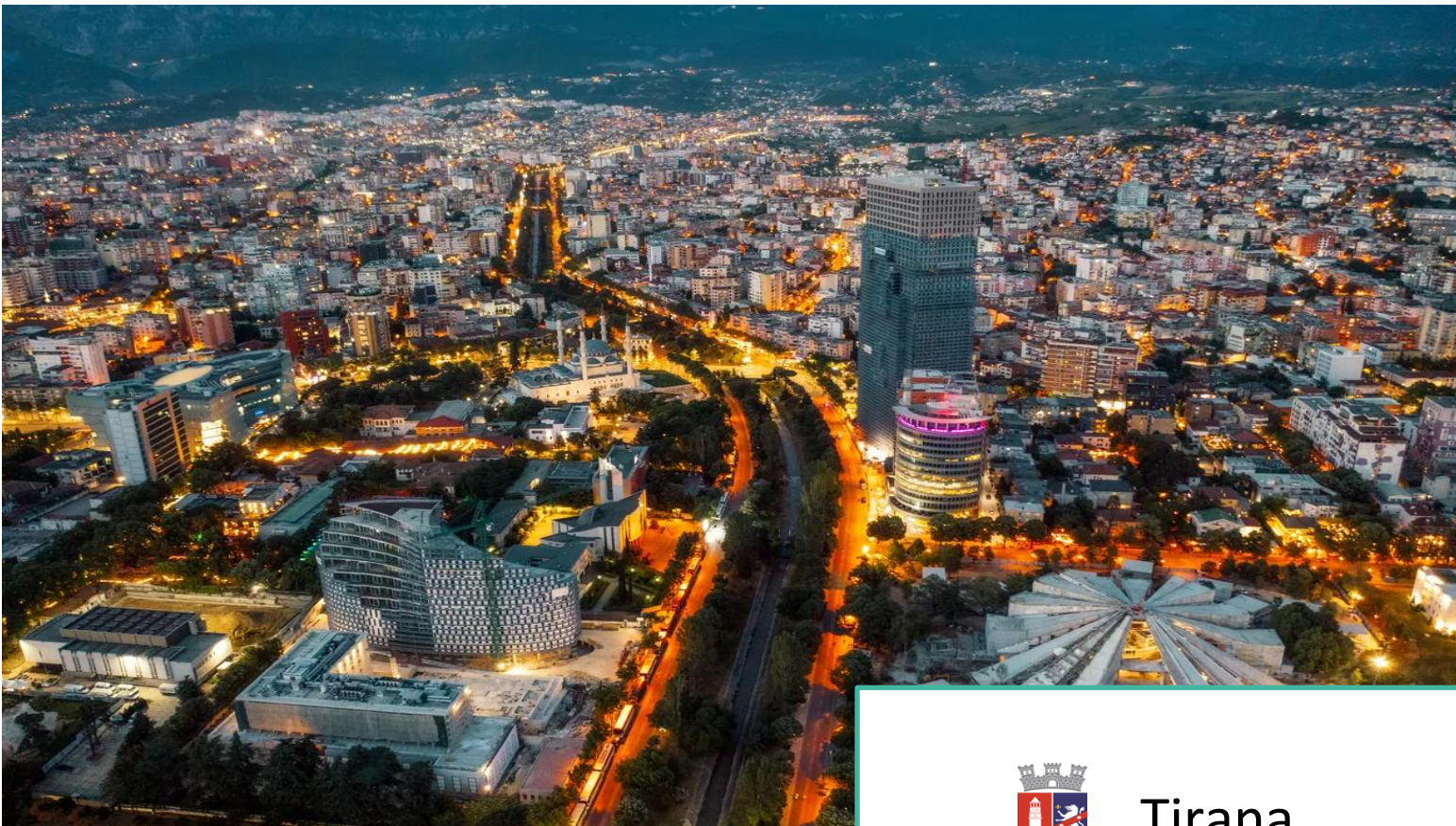


Image: The city of Tirana. Source: Bing photos



Tirana

9. Tirana

9.1 Financial support for businesses focused on reuse

The challenge

Businesses, particularly SMEs and startups, face barriers in shifting from linear to circular models due to limited financial capacity and regulatory support in the city of Tirana.

The background

It is believed that providing direct financial support will accelerate the transition of small businesses towards reuse-based models, while inspiring others through concrete examples.

The testing scope

The action seeks to understand whether financial incentives encourage companies to adopt reuse more systematically in their operations, and how these practices translate into measurable benefits for both local economies and the environment.

Description of the testing action

The pilot was implemented through the Green Grants scheme, designed to support businesses offering reuse-oriented products and services. Grants were awarded to companies such as RawMode, ReUse Tirana, and EcoGreaseSolution, enabling them to strengthen their activities, expand their reach, and demonstrate the value of reuse in practice.

Monitoring

Implementation of the funded projects is followed closely, complemented by surveys and interviews with participating entrepreneurs to capture their experiences and perspectives. Economic and environmental metrics are assessed before and after the grants, allowing changes to be tracked over time. Particular attention is given to the number of businesses supported, the development of new reuse-oriented products and services, reductions in waste and resource use, and the level of positive feedback received from businesses on the value of the support.

Results

The Green Grants scheme provided funding and visibility to dozens of businesses, enabling them to strengthen their operations and expand their impact. Several tangible reuse solutions were successfully introduced to the market as a direct outcome of the support. In addition, the beneficiaries were showcased in international circular economy initiatives, giving them wider recognition and positioning them as part of the global movement towards reuse and resource efficiency.

Learning points

Managing timelines proved difficult for some businesses, as supply chain issues, regulatory hurdles, and the complexity of implementation led to delays in meeting contractual deadlines. Administrative requirements also created

obstacles, particularly for first-time business owners who were more focused on operations than paperwork.

Monitoring emerged as another area of complexity. Six-month verification processes revealed disparities between original proposals and actual implementation, underscoring the need for more robust tracking systems. Finally, communication gaps were observed, with limited or delayed responses from some beneficiaries during the monitoring phase, making it harder to track progress and provide timely support.

Iteration actions

Future iterations of the Green Grants scheme will place greater emphasis on creating more realistic timelines, supported by staged deliverables that can improve completion rates. Structured check-ins and clearer reporting templates will be introduced to address communication gaps and provide more consistent oversight. To ensure feasibility, applicants will be encouraged to design focused, achievable projects rather than overly ambitious proposals. In addition, targeted technical assistance, particularly for digital projects, will be offered to increase success rates and help beneficiaries overcome implementation challenges.

Impact on the IAP

The funding scheme will be scaled up by seeking EU and international funding, allowing more businesses to be supported and the impact of reuse practices to expand. The city of Tirana also plans to establish a Green Innovation Hub to incubate circular economy startups.



Image: Nevermind, a circular eyewear project. Source: Tirana, LGC partner

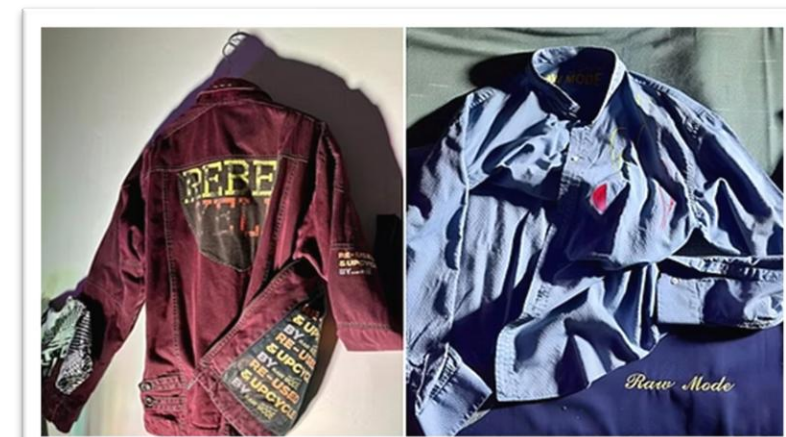


Image: RawMode, a circular clothing brand. Source: Tirana, LGC partner

9.2 Green Events & Material Flow Analysis

The challenge

Public events in Tirana often generate large amounts of single-use plastic and packaging waste. There is little experience in organizing green events that follow circular economy principles.

The background

It is believed that piloting a green event with reusable cups and plates, supported by mobile dishwashers, can significantly reduce waste and show both citizens and organizers that reuse systems are possible and effective.

The testing scope

This pilot sets out to examine the effects of replacing single-use packaging with reusable alternatives at a public event. The aim is to measure how much waste can be avoided through this substitution and to understand how participants respond to the change.

Description of the testing action

The pilot involved organizing a public event designed as a showcase for green practices. As a central feature, only reusable cups, plates, and cutlery were used, replacing single-use packaging entirely. To ensure hygiene and practicality, mobile dishwashers were installed on site. Furthermore, in collaboration with ICLEI, the Material Flow Analysis (MFA) was used to measure the avoided waste.

Monitoring

The number of participants was recorded to provide a baseline for assessing the scale of the intervention. The quantity of single-use packaging avoided was calculated, offering a direct measure of environmental benefit. Participant feedback was collected to assess satisfaction levels and the acceptance of reusable products in a public setting. In addition, the Material Flow Analysis generated recommendations for improving the design and implementation of future events.

Results

The pilot produced clear data on the amount of waste prevented by replacing single-use items with reusable alternatives, which is tangible evidence of the environmental benefits that can be achieved through such measures. Feedback was, also, gathered from citizens and organizers, so the overall feasibility of hosting green events can be highlighted.

Learning points

The pilot showed that citizens are generally open to behavioral change when practical alternatives are provided, demonstrating strong acceptance of reusables during the event. At the same time, it became clear that event organizers require guidance and support in managing the logistics.

Iteration actions

The pilot was implemented through the Green Grants scheme, designed to support businesses offering reuse-oriented products and services. Grants were awarded to companies such as RawMode, ReUse Tirana, and EcoGreaseSolution, enabling them to strengthen their activities, expand their reach, and demonstrate the value of reuse in practice.

Impact on the IAP

The next steps focus on scaling the approach to additional events across the city, ensuring that the lessons learned can be applied more broadly. To institutionalize the practice, municipal guidelines will be introduced requiring the use of reuse systems at all public events. The data and insights from the Material Flow Analysis will also be used to refine regulations and improve event planning, making reuse not only feasible but the standard for sustainable event management.



Image: Repairing shoes, belts and other leather materials. Source: Tirana, LGC partner



Image: The city of Granada. Source: Bing photos



Granada

10. Granada

10.1 Open – Air Festival

The challenge

Granada faces high levels of air pollution and traffic congestion, being among the most polluted cities in Spain. There is also a need to raise citizen awareness about sustainable mobility and circular practices, linking them with healthier urban lifestyles.

The background

It is believed that transforming central streets into temporary car-free spaces through cultural events can foster a sense of ownership among citizens, reduce emissions, and increase awareness of sustainable mobility and circular economy practices.

The testing scope

The testing action seeks to answer a central question: What if closing central streets to traffic for a community festival can both reduce emissions and inspire citizens to adopt more sustainable mobility and consumption habits?

Description of the testing action

As part of European Mobility Week 2024, an open-air festival was piloted by transforming San Juan de Dios Street into a car-free space for the first time. The event featured a range of activities designed to link mobility awareness with circular practices, including waste reduction and recycling workshops, repair stations, and upcycling activities. Local NGOs, schools, universities, neighborhood associations, and businesses partnered with the municipal sustainability and mobility departments to deliver the programme, creating a collaborative platform for environmental action and community engagement.

Monitoring

Attendance was tracked across different groups, including residents, families, children, and young people, to assess the event’s ability to engage the community. At the same time, the municipality’s sensor network was used to estimate CO₂ reductions achieved during the car-free day. Finally, media coverage and social media engagement, measured through impressions and interactions, were analyzed to capture the visibility and outreach of the initiative.

Results

The pilot attracted more than 1,500 participants, including around 400 children and young people. Online, the campaign hashtag generated over 10,000 impressions, extending the event's visibility beyond the physical space. In addition, the initiative received positive press coverage, which increased public awareness and gave strong visibility to the circular practices showcased during the festival.

Learning points

Temporary traffic closures are a highly effective way to raise awareness about sustainable mobility and its benefits. Collaboration with NGOs, schools, and neighborhood associations proved essential for increasing attendance and for creating a sense of community ownership. Finally, framing the initiative as a festive and inclusive event helped attract broad participation.

Iteration actions

Future editions of the festival will place greater emphasis on monitoring behavioral change, using surveys and follow-up campaigns to assess whether awareness translates into long-term practices. The programme will also be expanded to include more hands-on mobility trials, such as bike-sharing demonstrations, e-scooter use, and public transport promotions, giving participants the chance to experience alternatives directly. In addition, partnerships with schools and businesses will be strengthened to scale up participation.

Impact on the IAP

The open-air festival will be integrated into Granada's annual European Mobility Week programme, ensuring its continuity as a recurring initiative. To enable scaling, funding will be sought through municipal budgets as well as European sources, including the ERDF and Next Generation EU. Looking ahead, the city will also explore replicating the model in other neighborhoods and link the action with the implementation of Low Emission Zone policies.



Image: The Bike Hospital pilot action. Source: Granada, LGC partner

10.2 Bike Hospital

The challenge

Granada suffers from high levels of traffic congestion and air pollution. At the same time, hundreds of impounded bicycles are left unused in police depots. The city needs innovative ways to promote sustainable mobility, reduce waste, and engage youth in circular practices.

The background

It is believed that repairing abandoned bicycles and putting them back into circulation through a bike-sharing system can simultaneously reduce emissions, extend product life cycles, and promote sustainable transport, while providing students with practical Circular Economy and entrepreneurial skills.

The testing scope

The testing action seeks to answer a central question: What if impounded bicycles are refurbished by students and reintroduced into a public bike-sharing system? Can this both reduce waste and provide a scalable, low-cost mobility solution for the city?

Description of the testing action

Between September 2024 and June 2025, the municipality piloted the Bike Hospital, an initiative that combines technical education with circular economy practices. Students from the Mechanical Department of IES H. Lanz refurbished unused bicycles, while students from the New Technologies programme developed a mobile app to enable access and tracking. Local businesses contributed by donating spare parts, and the Municipal Police supported the project by providing unused bicycles.

Monitoring

Quantitative data was gathered on the number of bicycles refurbished and made operational, alongside the number of users and trips recorded each month through the app. The project also estimated CO₂ reductions by comparing the use of refurbished bicycles with baseline transport modes. In addition, participation levels of students and local businesses were tracked to assess the strength of educational engagement and community involvement.



Image: Open-Air festival during European Mobility Week 2024. Source: Granada, LGC partner



Image: The Bike Hospital pilot action. Source: Granada, LGC partner

Results

150 bicycles were successfully refurbished, of which 90 were integrated into a local bike-sharing scheme. A cross-disciplinary student team was created, bringing together expertise from mechanical, digital, and business backgrounds, and demonstrating the project’s value as an educational platform. Contributions from local businesses in the form of spare parts reduced both costs and waste, adding a strong circular dimension on the initiative. If scaled citywide, the project is projected to deliver an annual reduction of 15 tons of CO₂, highlighting its potential impact on sustainable mobility and climate goals.

Learning points

The pilot showed that integrating circular economy education into vocational curricula provides strong learning-by-doing opportunities for students, combining technical skills with practical experience. It also highlighted the importance of ensuring the technical robustness of supporting digital tools, such as the bike-sharing app. Finally, the project underlined the value of public–private partnerships, as collaboration with businesses and municipal services is key to achieving financial and operational sustainability.

Iteration actions

Future iterations of the Bike Hospital will focus on strengthening the IT development and technical support of the mobile app to ensure reliability and user satisfaction. The pool of local businesses donating materials will be expanded, creating a stronger supply of spare parts and reducing reliance on new components. To encourage wider adoption, incentives such as gamification features or free trial periods will be tested. Finally, a clear governance structure will be established so the initiative can be scaled beyond the pilot phase.

Impact on the IAP

The Bike Hospital will be integrated into the city’s sustainable mobility strategy as a concrete action linking education with circular and climate goals. Partnerships with VET schools, NGOs, and private sponsors will be formalized to ensure the project’s continuity. Looking ahead, the model will be explored for replication in other Andalusian cities, positioning it as a transferable example of how circular economy principles can be combined with mobility and education.



Image: The Bike Hospital pilot action. Source: Granada, LGC partner

Testing Actions to Pave Way for Circular Economy in Cities

Delivered by Dr. Eleni Feleki, URBACT Lead Expert

