LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Cluj Metropolitan Area, Romania
420 000 inhabitants

Challenge

The Circular Gap. Cluj faces critical hurdles in waste management and resource efficiency. The region struggles with a significant lack of public awareness and insufficient infrastructure, which hinders the adoption of circular economy practices across its peri-urban communities.

Local heroes

Our approach relied on a dedicated coalition of local authorities, expert trainers, and community leaders. Their shared commitment to sustainable urban transformation provides the essential energy and expertise needed to promote and implement circular practices at the grassroots level.



Lessons learnt

For cities looking to replicate this initiative: Engage your community early, using practical, local examples rather than abstract concepts. It is vital to combine expert-led training with hands-on activities to ensure knowledge sticks. Finally, leverage multiple outreach channels and gather continuous feedback to refine the experience for maximum impact.

Solution

Metropolitan Caravan on Circular Economy

To bridge the gap between abstract policy and local action, we deployed the Metropolitan Caravan, a series of interactive events focusing on sustainability. We translated complex circular economy principles into practical, accessible learning experiences by combining expert-led training with hands-on practice and open community dialogue. This pilot activity was designed to build local capacity and directly inform our broader metropolitan awareness strategy. Early results:

- **60 residents per action, on average**
- **Knowledge gain: Post-training surveys revealed a 40% increase in self-declared understanding of CE principles.**



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INTERCOMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
CIMA
CLUJ METROPOLITAN AREA

LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Central Corfu and Diapontia Islands, Greece
67 112 inhabitants

Challenge

Extremely increased tourism flows during the tourist season that goes well beyond the island's carrying capacity and leads to the production of a great amount of waste.

Local heroes

Local authorities, citizens and the local University have to be part of a strong team with one main target and strong will to fulfil the most of the elements described in Corfu's Integrated Action Plan.





Lessons learnt

The most important thing is to change citizens' mindset. Citizens' engagement procedure needs to be carefully created and highly supported. Also, to have the expected political support, politicians need to understand that their city is part of a "big plan" and many opportunities for cooperation with other European cities will appear.

Solution

Measuring the children's understanding about Circular Economy

The pilot action was implemented in February 2025 in an urban space. The basic tool was a questionnaire and a "circular economy station" was installed. 20 classes from 5 primary schools have completed the questionnaire, almost 360 students participated. Results:

- **Using a 5-point scale, the average total score for all the classes is 4, showing a high level of understanding.**
- **All the students showed very high willing of participating and starting an effort to engage their parents in circular economy principles.**



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ΚΑΠΟΔΙΣΤΡΙΑΚΗ ΑΝΑΠΤΥΞΙΑΚΗ Α.Ε.

LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Granada, Spain
232 717 inhabitants

Challenge

The challenge was threefold: introducing the circular economy as a lever for improving sustainability and air quality, highlighting that it goes beyond waste management alone, and raising awareness among tourism and retail sectors to amplify impact.

Local heroes

Delivery relies on a local coalition:

- City Council + University + Utilities (strategy and deployment).
- Service sector + citizens (co-design and everyday uptake).
- Technology providers (machines, software, installation, maintenance)
- ...with the necessary impulse of a dynamic and motivated Municipality team.



Lessons learnt

- **Make circular economy visible and experiential, not abstract.**
- **Perfection is the enemy of good. Small, casual pilot actions allow to test, check, fail, rethink and improve strategies before enforcing.**
- **Find your local story: place-based arguments (air quality improvement, textile waste, retrofitting trends...) are crucial to adapt circular economy principles to your local context.**

Solution

Integrated and inclusive local ecopoint

Ecoparque Norte is a local flagship and nationally awarded project. A public collaboration with a non-profit foundation, aimed at transforming the municipal domestic waste management centre into an innovative and integrative initiative. It combines circular economy principles, social inclusion and professional training in a unique model. Neurodivergent people are trained as electronic and domestic waste managers in a highly qualified facility, creating meaningful employment opportunities while addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable practices within the community.



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Ayuntamiento de Granada

LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Guimarães, Portugal
156 830 inhabitants

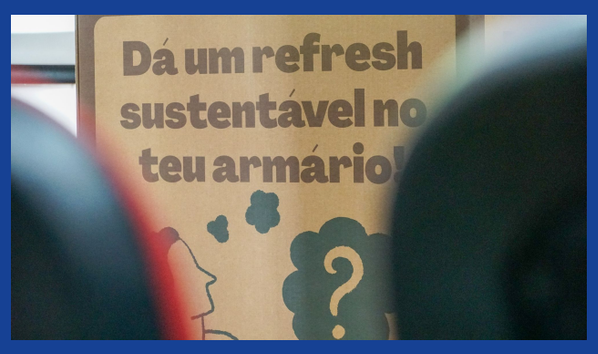
Challenge

The textile sector is deeply rooted in Guimarães' heritage and economy. Strong industrialisation creates challenges in closing textile material loops, improving resource efficiency and supporting the municipality's transition towards climate neutrality.

Local heroes

Local heroes are the URBACT Local Group, whose collaboration made the IAP possible. Schools inspire families to act, Vitrus ensures reliable collection, ToBe Green gives textiles new value, and the Landscape Laboratory coordinates and connects all partners.





Lessons learnt

- **Place people at the centre of decision-making.**
- **Involve sector actors from the start to address real challenges and build trust.**
- **Anchor actions in the community through everyday spaces like schools, combine infrastructure with education, ensure clear coordination, collect data early and design simple pilots that can be realistically scaled citywide.**

Solution

Schools Textile Collection to Enable Circular Behaviour

Guimarães implemented a selective collection system for textiles, using schools as trusted community hubs. One container in each of the municipality's 88 schools, ensuring full territorial coverage. Since the pilot phase, more than 4 tonnes of textile waste have been collected and valorised through reuse, upcycling and recycling. The action has already avoided an estimated 728kg of CO_2 emissions and saved approximately 13,874 m^3 of water compared to producing new textiles. Supported by over 50 educational activities, this approach simplifies participation, generates data on textile flows and promotes long-term circular behaviour.



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CÂMARA MUNICIPAL DE GUIMARÃES

LET'S GO CIRCULAR

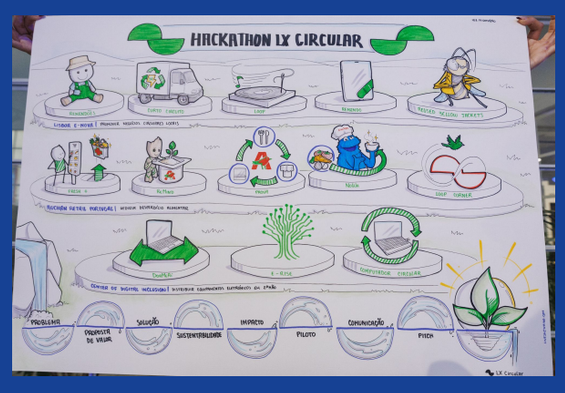
Lisboa, Portugal
575 739 inhabitants

Challenge

Explore topics as responsible citizen consumption patterns, promoting the local economy through more circular businesses and creating the conditions that allow citizens to prevent the production of waste and facilitate the means necessary for reparation.

Local heroes

The action relies on the joint efforts of Impact Hub Lisboa, Lisbon City Council – Municipal Directorate of Economy and Innovation, Lisboa E-Nova, and Unicorn Factory Lisboa, combining policy support, technical expertise, and strong links to the local innovation ecosystem.



Lessons learnt

Engaging young talent early brings fresh perspectives and energy. Clear challenge definition helps focus collective effort. Public and private actors must work side by side.

Finally, linking ideation moments like hackathons to longer incubation processes is crucial to turn ideas into lasting circular solutions.

Solution

Circular Economy Acceleration Programme

Lisbon launched a Circular Economy Acceleration Programme within LET'S GO CIRCULAR!, aiming to boost circular businesses in the city. A key milestone was the first hackathon, which brought together around 60 young participants from different university courses. From this process, three priority challenges were selected. These challenges will continue to be developed through a structured incubation phase hosted by the Impact Hub Lisboa. The expected impact includes strengthening entrepreneurial skills, fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration, and supporting the emergence of circular business models that retain value locally and contribute to a more resource-efficient urban economy.



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LISBOA E•NOVA
Agência de Energia e Ambiente de Lisboa

LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Malmö, Sweden
366 000 inhabitants

Challenge

Increase resource efficiency and reduce emissions together with the local industry, by introducing industrial and urban symbiosis.

Local heroes



MINC (Malmö Incubator) is a key partner in the development of the Resource Hub as they have the circular business model knowledge. Our resource coach who will support the SMEs in their journey towards increased resource efficiency, and our colleagues at the Business and External Relations Department with connections to the business community of Malmö are also invaluable for the hub.

Lessons learnt

- **Find good examples of industrial symbiosis and circular economy champions and tell their story to others.**
- **Communication – being clear about what we are, what we offer, benefits and earning the businesses trust.**
- **Collaboration – find other supporters of the circular transitions and cooperate, together we are stronger.**

Solution

Malmö Resource Hub

Malmö Resource Hub is a local arena for collaboration and support in the transition towards a circular economy. The Hub offers

- **resource coaching,**
- **workshops,**
- **and network meetings**

for SMEs to support them in making their business more circular and finding matches for industrial symbiosis.

www.malmo.se/resurshubben



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City of Malmö

LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Munich, Germany
1.6 million inhabitants

Challenge

Munich faced significant construction and demolition waste generation, with building materials accounting for 60% of the city's material footprint. A critical challenge was enabling cost-effective reuse of building components and establishing economically viable secondary material markets while managing demolition and construction site logistics.

Local heroes

CirCoFin thrives in Munich thanks to close cooperation between the Department for Climate and Environmental Protection, coordinating the EU project, and the Department of Communal Services, managing the pilot. Additional contributions come from municipal departments (land, procurement, legal, construction) and external partners such as demolition firms, the construction industry, planners, start-ups, and finance experts. Co-creation with Lisbon, Copenhagen, and Zero Waste Scotland fosters mutual learning and best practice exchange.

Lessons learnt

Other cities should involve the construction industry, dismantling companies, crafts and planners at an early stage to understand real needs and material flows. A clear catalog of criteria for location, operator, material quality, business model design and logistics is important. Clarify legal (liability, waste status) from the beginning and plan digital solutions (material passports, digital platform) from the outset. Small pilot applications create trust and scalability.

Solution

A Circular Construction Hub for Munich as an innovative tool for climate-friendly construction

CirCoFin, an EU-funded €6 million project, develops a Munich building component exchange promoting circular construction. It facilitates reuse of materials from demolished structures, combining technical planning with economic analysis and stakeholder integration across investors and industry. The project aims to extend material lifecycles, cut primary resource demand by up to 16 million tonnes annually, and create a replicable model linking urban mining with circular building standards.



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CIRCOFIN

Landeshauptstadt München

LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Oulu, Finland
217 000 inhabitants

Challenge

Oulu struggled to coordinate construction material flows due to fragmented data and limited cross-department collaboration. These issues slowed circular practices and highlighted the need for better planning tools and governance.

Local heroes

The Circular Economy Coordination Group which includes city departments, regional businesses and academies is an important actor with local clusters. The Circular Economy Specialist coordinating the implementation also plays a key role.



Lessons learnt

Shared data tools and early planning integration are essential. Collaboration between institutions and research institutes, supported by political commitment, will accelerate circular economy solutions. Digital tools succeed when responsibilities are clear and communication is continuous.

Solution

Digital material bank

One action is to create a digital material bank to track and match soil and construction materials across city projects. The tool improves visibility, reduces unnecessary transport, and supports reuse. It is expected to cut logistics emissions and reduce primary material use while strengthening cooperation between departments.





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LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Riga, Latvia
595 053 inhabitants

Challenge

Public procurement is a powerful tool for economic transformation. However, the lack of expertise in circular procurement, the workload, ready-made templates for routine procurement, and the fear of being punished for mistakes hinder the transition to a circular economy.

Local heroes

To effectively implement circular economy principles in public procurement, it is essential to foster collaboration based on openness and trust among sector departments, procurement specialists, and municipal management. Additionally, the support and involvement of external experts and industry representatives are crucial.





Solution

Inclusion of circular economy principles in public procurements

To ensure the systematic integration of circular economy principles in public procurement, it is essential to develop an industry-specific framework. This framework will support departments in understanding and applying circular economy principles across various types of procurement. Riga has already implemented these principles in several public procurement projects, e.g., the design for building reconstruction (2023), interior design (2024), and outdoor improvements (2025). This action is to onboard experts and industry representatives to support municipal staff in creating actionable procurements across all sectors.



Lessons learnt

1. **A common understanding: of the circular economy (CE) and a good result.**
2. **All parties' knowledge of CE is invaluable.**
3. **The real budget can vary greatly in both directions.**
4. **Initial concept → materials → final design.**
5. **Availability and compatibility of materials are a challenge.**
6. **Consider the full life cycle carefully: repairability and replaceability**

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RIGA ENERGY AGENCY

LET'S GO CIRCULAR

Tirana, Albania
863 694 inhabitants

Challenge

Rapid growth, rising waste volumes, limited infrastructure, low consumer awareness, and gaps in the regulatory framework challenge Tirana's transition to circularity. Until recently, no dedicated local circular strategy existed, despite strong reuse traditions and emerging SMEs.

Local heroes

Led by the Directorate of Environment, the Urban Local Group brings together municipal departments, SMEs, NGOs, and community actors, co-designing actions and ensuring cross-sector ownership of Tirana's circular transition.



Lessons learnt

Start small but practical: pilot grants and visible reuse actions build trust fast. Map local businesses early, work cross-departmentally, and combine funding with awareness campaigns. Circularity advances quicker when incentives, infrastructure, and citizen engagement move together.

Solution

Green Grants & Circular Business Support

Tirana launched pilot "Green Grants" to fund local SMEs adopting reuse and circular models, using municipal financing as a practical lever for change. The action mapped reuse-oriented businesses, supported innovation, and tested how small grants can accelerate transition. Building on this, the Integrated Action Plan expands support through: reusable packaging for farmers, a "Buy Local, Waste Less" awareness campaign, a Circular Economy Hub for SMEs (training + funding), green business certification, and reusable systems for public events. Together, these measures create incentives, reduce single-use materials, and establish Tirana's first structured local circular framework.



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BASHKIA TIRANË