

9th ESDN Peer Learning Platform

Discussion Paper

Sustainable Culture and Circular
Economy: Building Resilience for
Tomorrow

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Introduction

This Discussion Paper will provide participants taking part in the 9th ESDN Peer Learning Platform with some background information on the Platform's focus, the topics that will be covered by speakers and presenters, as well as how the Workshop's interactive parts will be run.

The Peer Learning Platform will be focusing on "Sustainable Culture and Circular Economy: Building Resilience for Tomorrow". The Platform is taking place in Bucharest, Romania on 22-23 October 2024, and is being organized by the European Sustainable Development Network together with the Romanian Prime Minister's Office – Department of Sustainable Development.

After the success of the 21st ESDN Workshop, which took place in Vienna, Austria in May 2023, where the ESDN, for the first time, looked at the intersection of culture and sustainable development, the ESDN decided to dedicate another event, and more time, to unpacking this important topic.

Circular Economy was also chosen as a topic, because it is also very important and a topic the ESDN has not dealt with explicitly over the past years.

Day 1 and Day 2 of the Platform will be a mixture of keynote presentations, panel discussions, and discussion rounds. The ESDN hopes to provide all participants a grounding in both topics at hand, culture and sustainability, as well as in Circular Economy. This will then be supplemented and supported by good practice examples of each topic. The main premise behind the ESDN Peer Learning Platforms is to listen, learn, and exchange with colleagues from other countries. The ESDN encourages everyone to ask questions of one another, exchange information, good practices, experiences (both good and bad), as this is helpful for everyone to take back home with them.

Chapter 1 of this Discussion Paper will focus on putting culture in the context of sustainable development and provide some background on the main ideas surrounding culture and how it can be a force for more sustainability, especially in cultural policy. This is then coupled with a brief preview of the three presentations from the Platform's Session 1 on Defining Culture and Sustainable Development.

Chapter 2 focuses on the presentations that will be given in the Platform's Session 2 on Fostering Cultural Shifts towards more Sustainability. This will feature four presentations on how culture can foster a shift towards more sustainable behaviours from individuals, communities, institutions, and the private sector. As is the case with sustainability and sustainable development in general, it takes more than a government approach to reach our goals. It takes a whole of society approach for sustainable development. This session will also end with a panel discussion with the speakers, so we encourage everyone to ask them questions.

Chapter 3 focuses on Exchange Space 1 on Government Good Practice Cases in Fostering Culture to further Sustainable Development Policies. The purpose of the exchange spaces is to allow participants the chance to exchange with their peers from other countries on good practice cases. Table leads will present their cases for 10-15 minutes, leaving about 30 minutes for more in-depth discussions. Luckily, in Exchange Space 1, everyone will be able to visit each table and hear each presentation. You will find short texts to the table presentations below in Chapter 3. We highly encourage you to have a think while reading about the potential questions you might like to ask your colleagues, as well as any relevant experiences you, or your country, have made that could relate to the topic being shared and discussed.

Chapter 4 marks the shift in the program from Day 1 to Day 2, which will focus on Circular Economy. This chapter corresponds to Session 3 on the Principles of Circular Economy for Sustainable Development. It also features introductions to the presentations that will be given by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), by the Secretary General of the Hungarian Council for Sustainable Development, and by a representative from the OECD.

Chapter 5 is devoted to the Exchange Space 2 on Good Practice Cases in Implementing Circular Economy Policies. As is the case with chapter 3 and Exchange Space 1, this chapter provides short introductions to the good practice cases. The format remains the same as Exchange Space 1. However, participants will only be able to visit three out of the four tables. This will then end with a quick summary by each table lead, so even if one was not able to go to each table, one will still receive a good summary of the discussions that took place.

Finally, the ESDN Peer Learning Platforms take place under the Chatham House Rule, where we do not publish anything with anyone's name on it. This allows for a more honest discussion and exchange with everyone. The participant list and the presentations, after attaining permission from the speakers, will be shared with everyone who attended the Platform, but should not be widely shared beyond those who took part.

After the Platform, an ESDN Policy Note will be published that will highlight the main outcomes, ideas, and recommendations that come out of the presentations, the discussion panel, and from the Exchange Spaces. The ESDN will publish this as soon as possible.

Chapter 1: Defining Culture and Sustainable Development

This chapter focuses on putting culture in the context of sustainable development and provide some background on the main ideas surrounding culture and how it can be a force for more sustainability, especially in cultural policy. This is then coupled with a brief preview of the three presentations from the Platform's Session 1 on Defining Culture and Sustainable Development. It also highlights the difficulty surrounding linking culture and cultural policy to sustainable development.

The two years since the adoption of resolution [72/229](#), a resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 December 2017 on culture and sustainable development, which outlined the benefits culture can have on sustainable development and the SDGs. In this resolution, it was set out that the General Assembly:

1. Reaffirms the role of culture as an enabler of sustainable development that provides people and communities with a strong sense of identity and social cohesion and contributes to more effective and sustainable development policies and measures at all levels, and stresses in this regard that policies responsive to cultural contexts can yield better, sustainable, inclusive and equitable development outcomes;
2. Recognizes the potential of culture as a driver of sustainable development, which contributes to a strong and viable economic sector by generating income, creating decent jobs and addressing both the economic and social dimensions of poverty through cultural heritage and cultural and creative industries, while providing innovative and effective solutions to cross-cutting issues, such as education, health, gender equality and the environment;
3. Emphasizes the important contribution of culture to the three dimensions of sustainable development and to the achievement of national development objectives and the Sustainable Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals, and in this regard acknowledges:
 - a. That culture contributes to inclusive economic development, as cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism and cultural infrastructure are sources of income generation and job creation, including at the community level, thus improving living conditions and fostering community-based economic growth, and contribute to empowering individuals;
 - b. That culture contributes to inclusive social development for all, including local communities and indigenous peoples, with respect for cultural diversity, safeguarding of the cultural and natural heritage, fostering of cultural institutions and strengthening of cultural and creative industries;
 - c. That culture contributes to environmental sustainability, since the protection of cultural and biological diversity and the natural heritage is crucial to sustainable development, while supporting traditional systems of environmental protection, and resource management can contribute to the increased sustainability of fragile

ecosystems and the preservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, reducing land degradation and mitigating the effects of climate change.¹

The United Nations system organizations have worked together to highlight the role of culture as a vital component for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In the Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on 5 August 2019, it was confirmed that a more holistic approach has been adopted that better integrates the safeguarding of built and living heritage, promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions and support to the creative economy, demonstrating culture's transformative power in areas including education, gender equality, social cohesion, poverty reduction, human rights, migration and tackling climate change. A dedicated implementation and monitoring entity was established to spearhead UNESCO efforts to strengthen and measure culture's transformational impact on the realization of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, UNESCO reinforced its cross-cutting programmatic capacities to reflect this change in paradigm through a comprehensive mapping of the contributions of its conventions on culture across the 17 Goals and their 169 targets. That effort culminated in the publication in 2018 of the UNESCO brochure Culture for the 2030 Agenda.

Furthermore, the 120 Voluntary National Reviews that were submitted to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development between 2017 and 2019, show notable progress regarding the integration of culture into national policies. Information on culture in those Voluntary National Reviews shows an overall trend towards greater linkages with social inclusion and education, as well as new emphasis on indigenous communities, economic development and technology.²

However, a report "[Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda](#)" by the Culture 2030 Goal Campaign, which takes stock of the first four years of the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda from the perspective of culture, provides an analysis of the presence of culture and associated concepts in the annual progress reviews for the SDGs, focusing on the VNRs submitted to the HLPFs in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.

The report expresses concern about the limited presence of culture in the VNRs and in the broader documents emerging from the HLPF review process, including the relevant ministerial and political declarations. This is especially acute in SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals), which fail to take advantage of the potential of citizen participation in cultural life and of local, national, and international cultural collaborations.

The reality is that references to culture in the SDGs are scarce and do not sufficiently acknowledge the many ways in which cultural aspects influence and contribute to sustainable development. The keyword analysis of the VNRs research finds that the cultural dimension of sustainable development lags significantly behind (between one eighth to one fifth of) the other three recognized dimensions (the social, economic, and environmental) of sustainable development.³

Though culture is acknowledged as being important and influential on sustainable development, its uptake seems to be lagging behind other aspects of sustainable development. Given that culture informs so many aspects of the way different people interact and view the world, more attention should be given to this

¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 2017. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N17/467/33/PDF/N1746733.pdf?OpenElement>

² Report of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. August 2019. P.3. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3826015?ln=en>

³ Culture in the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda. P.3. https://www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/culture2030goal_en_exres.pdf

important aspect for enhanced sustainability. This is one of the main reasons the ESDN chose to address culture in the context of sustainable development and the SDGs.

This notion of culture lacking a well-defined place in sustainable development is further supported by Nancy Duxbury, Anita Kangas & Christiaan De Beukelaer in their article “Cultural policies for sustainable development: four strategic paths”. They posit that the issue might lie in the fact that there is a disconnect between definitions of what culture is, with cultural policy defining culture as creative or artistic expression and heritage. However, the connection of this definition to a more anthropological idea of culture as a way of life is also an important aspect. It is this discrepancy, they argue, which makes it difficult to have a systematic engagement with culture for sustainable development.⁴

The challenge for cultural policy is to embody very different roles in relation to sustainable development. The authors identified four avenues for cultural policy to be more aligned with and connect to sustainable development: 1) to safeguard and sustain cultural practices and rights by placing an emphasis on the cultural policy values of continuity and diversity; 2) to ‘green’ the operations and impacts of cultural organizations and industries, where cultural policy includes an explicit environmental dimension and acts as a vehicle to translate environmental regulation, planning, and restrictions to the organisational models of the cultural sector, and potentially to advance them; 3) to raise awareness and catalyse actions about sustainability and climate change, which emphasises the role for artistic expression in the process towards widespread cultural change and ‘way of life’ transformation to modes of thinking and manners more complementary to sustainable living; and 4) to foster ‘ecological citizenship’, which places responsibility in humans valuing a global community that embraces global awareness about a global challenge, beyond merely national or regional interests and priorities. However, this objective stands in opposition with some of the other aims of culture policy when it comes to reinforcing national identities, where humans then think of national affiliation rather than in a global sense of humanity.⁵

Interplay between Culture and Sustainable Development

Just three months after the adoption of the Agenda 2030, the General Assembly of the UN agreed on a resolution on Culture and Sustainable Development ([70/214 22.12.2015](#)). The resolution seeks “To ensure a more visible and effective integration and mainstreaming of culture into economic, social and environmental development policies and strategies at all levels” (Art, 10.b.). Various challenges make it complicated to implement this resolution, be it the complexity of the many aspects of “culture”, or the fact that culture is not prominently included in the current agenda.

Art and culture can have positive effects on sustainable development in various ways: fostering inclusion and peace, building up hope and purpose, or increasing well-being in general. Art and culture provide platforms for debate and reflection on relevant topics within democratic systems, but they also constitute an important economic sector. Two factors are, however, needed to tap into the potential of culture on sustainable development: *protection* and *support* – the *protection* of cultural rights on the one hand and cultural heritage on the other, as well as the *support* of free artistic expression and an independent culture scene.

As 2030 is approaching, there are efforts, mainly from UNESCO and various cities’ associations, to advocate for a more comprehensive inclusion of culture in a possible follow-up agenda. Culture Ministers from all

⁴ Nancy Duxbury, Anita Kangas & Christiaan De Beukelaer (2017) Cultural policies for sustainable development: four strategic paths, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 23:2, p. 221-222.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 222-224.

over the world already call on the UN to include culture as a separate goal in the development agenda beyond 2030 ([Mondiacult Declaration, 2022, Art.19](#)).

Redefining the Good Life through the Lens of Culture: How sustainability intersects with our cultural values and the quest of a good life

Culture has a pivotal role in society. It shapes behaviours, communication narratives and lifestyles, which is why sustainability needs to receive attention in cultural programs. This presentation will focus on the three core topics:

- Circular economy – deep diving into circular textiles and fabrics
- Emotional durability
- Biodiversity – zooming into local ecosystems

Lastly, the presentation will introduce a repeatable model for driving sustainable change through culture that can be replicated across the region and leveraged across multiple SDG topics, emphasizing the role of craftsmanship, communications and advocacy in driving change.

Changing Cultural Mindsets towards Sustainable Development

Culture as a factor of sustainable development – the need to holistically approach a problem related to cultural policies and strategies at the national level / why an integrative approach is needed and how to avoid the confusion of positioning culture as a field in the context of all economic activities.

This presentation will provide brief overview of how we can use the international definitions and classifications for a more correct approach to the Creative Economy in Romania and I will be able to present some representative figures for the Creative Cultural Sectors active at the national level as well as the identified indicators that make the links between development, democracy and cultural values.

Chapter 2: Fostering Cultural Shifts towards more Sustainability

This chapter focuses on the presentations that will be given in the Platform's Session 2 on Fostering Cultural Shifts towards more Sustainability. This will feature four presentations on how culture can foster a shift towards more sustainable behaviours from individuals, communities, institutions, and the private sector. As is the case with sustainability and sustainable development in general, it takes more than a government approach to reach our goals. It takes a whole of society approach for sustainable development.

Mindset Shift & Cultural Behaviour

The *ESDN Report Youth Workshop 2024* highlights the importance of a mindset shift to prioritize sustainability. The chapter on Mindset Shift and Cultural Behaviour stresses the need for long-term thinking, aligning societal goals with core values like inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. This cultural shift is essential for embedding sustainability into all aspects of society, from education to business practices.

Ultimately, sustainability is not just a solution—it is the new foundation upon which all progress must be built. The future depends on our ability to embrace this shift wholeheartedly, embedding it into our collective consciousness and daily decisions. Only by elevating sustainability from a peripheral concern to a core value can we create a world where people and the planet thrive in harmony. This is the challenge of our time, and how we meet it will define the legacy we leave behind.

A mindset shift is crucial because it underpins and reinforces the changes needed in power redistribution, trust in institutions, and financial systems. Without a cultural commitment to sustainability, efforts to decentralize power, hold institutions accountable, or reform finance will falter. For example, empowering marginalized communities or youth requires a societal shift that values inclusivity and long-term thinking over short-term profit or corporate dominance. Trust in institutions will only grow if citizens adopt values like transparency and responsibility as non-negotiable standards. Likewise, financial reforms aimed at sustainability can only be effective if both individuals and institutions embrace ethical behaviour and shared accountability. This mindset transformation provides the critical foundation for the systemic changes needed across all key areas.

Changing Private Sector Culture towards Sustainable Development

This presentation will cover topics like the key pillars of Kaufland Romania CSR and sustainability strategy, focusing on important and success cultural projects financed by the company in the past years. The interactive presentation will expose both the quantitative and qualitative impact of the projects in Romanian communities.

Examining what Truly Matters to Societies for Higher Well-Being

Recognising that we were entering a period of uncertainty, Åland embarked on a journey in the early 2010s to make a long-term transition towards a fully sustainable society, a commitment unanimously affirmed by the Parliament in 2014. In this context the "Everyone Can Flourish" idea was born.

“Everyone Can Flourish” embodies an ethos of ethical living in everyday life. It also represents an aspirational common future worth striving for, a “Flourishing Age” in which no one is left behind and humanity has achieved peace within us, with each other and with the rest of nature. Over the past eight years of implementation, Åland has explored what truly matters to societies for greater well-being – and how to measure it

Nordic Green Roadmap for Cultural Institutions

The [*Nordic Green Roadmap for Cultural Institutions*](#) outlines a strategic framework for transforming the cultural sector into a leader in sustainability and environmental responsibility across the Nordic region.

Developed through collaboration with environmental experts and cultural professionals, the roadmap provides practical guidelines on reducing carbon footprints in cultural institutions. It offers actionable advice on energy efficiency, sustainable food sourcing, eco-friendly transport solutions, and strategic planning for a greener future. The roadmap also encourages institutions to adopt climate-conscious practices in cultural production and programming, ensuring that sustainability becomes an integral part of their operations.

A key aspect of the roadmap is fostering collaboration across sectors, linking culture with education, research, and environmental policy. By working together, institutions can inspire their audiences and communities to take an active role in the green transition, contributing to broader societal change. The Nordic Green Roadmap aims to position culture not only as a participant in sustainability efforts but as a driving force for innovation and transformation toward a more sustainable and resilient future.

Chapter 3: Government Good Practice Cases in Fostering Culture to further Sustainable Development Policies

This chapter focuses on Exchange Space 1 on Government Good Practice Cases in Fostering Culture to further Sustainable Development Policies. The purpose of the exchange spaces is to allow participants the chance to exchange with their peers from other countries on good practice cases. Table leads will present their cases for 10-15 minutes, leaving about 30 minutes for more in-depth discussions. Luckily, in Exchange Space 1, everyone will be able to visit each table and hear each presentation. You will find teasers to the table presentations below in Chapter 3. We highly encourage you to have a think while reading about the potential questions you might like to ask your colleagues, as well as any relevant experiences you, or your country, have made that could relate to the topic.

Sustainable development practices in the Cultural & Creative Sectors from Romania - Statute of the Cultural Professional Worker, Renovation Wave, Culture 2030 Indicators

The Ministry of Culture and its subordinated institutions have implemented three initiatives that highlight the significant role of cultural and creative sectors in sustainable development, demonstrating their alignment with all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the 2030 Agenda. These initiatives—the Statute of the Cultural Professional Worker, the Renovation Wave, and the UNESCO Culture 2030 Indicators—showcase how culture is both a driver and enabler of sustainable development.

These initiatives illustrate the diverse areas of intervention within the cultural sector. They contribute to SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) by establishing a coherent and unified legal and fiscal framework for independent artists in Romania. They also support SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) by promoting the circular economy through the collection and reuse of historical building materials. Additionally, they provide a tool for measuring the overall contribution of culture and cultural activities to sustainable development, thereby supporting all the SDGs.

North Macedonia - Economic development through culture and sustainability

Let us look inside and explore how culture acts as a fundamental pillar for national identity, social cohesion, and sustainability. In this Exchange Space, we will delve into the strategic frameworks guiding our cultural initiatives, including the development strategies and action plans, highlighting their impact on promoting inclusivity and community engagement. Cultural heritage and intercultural policies not only celebrate diversity but also foster a shared sense of belonging among citizens.

Let us engage in an interactive discussion on the transformative power of culture in enhancing social bonds, driving economic growth, and promoting sustainability. Let us discuss successful cultural programs and initiatives that exemplify how creativity and collaboration can bridge divides and empower marginalized communities. Together, let us envision a future where culture enriches our lives and strengthens the fabric of society!

Norway – Culture as a Catalyst for Systemic Transformations

The session will explore how culture can act as a catalyst for systemic transformations towards more sustainable and equitable futures, with a particular focus on how culture created for, with, and by young people can drive sustainable societal change.

Drawing on insights from Norway's initiatives in this field and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the session will highlight the crucial role of the arts and culture in fostering resilience, creativity, and emotional well-being among young people. By incorporating the voices of younger generations into the sustainability agenda through cultural participation, we aim to ensure that "no one is left behind" in realizing the vision of Agenda 2030.

Participants in the roundtable will gain insights into how engaging children and youth in the creation and experience of high-quality cultural activities strengthens their capacity to participate in democratic processes, promotes inclusivity, and enhances the role of arts and culture in education. The session will also showcase examples of how Norway is advancing cross-sectoral collaborations, linking the cultural, educational, and environmental sectors to address both local and global sustainability challenges.

Estonia – Integrating Culture as a Goal in the National Sustainable Development Strategy

Estonia has had the cultural goal integrated into its Sustainable Development Strategy since 2005. With regards to SDG implementation, Estonia has also followed the 17+1 structure, including the cultural goal into the SDG implementation and monitoring. This presentation will delve into the story of how and why Estonia decided to include culture in the Sustainable Development Strategy and also feature examples from the green transition from the culture sector.

Chapter 4: Principles of Circular Economy for Sustainable Development

This chapter marks the shift in the program from Day 1 to Day 2, which will focus on Circular Economy. This chapter corresponds to Session 3 on the Principles of Circular Economy for Sustainable Development. It also features introductions to the presentations that will be given by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), by the Secretary General of the Hungarian Council for Sustainable Development, and by a representative from the OECD.

Circular Economy (CE) is an economic model designed to minimize waste and make the most of resources. Unlike the traditional linear economy (which follows a "take, make, dispose" pattern), the circular economy aims to close the loop of product life cycles through principles such as reuse, repair, refurbishment, recycling, and sustainable design.

Key Principles of Circular Economy:

1. **Designing Out Waste and Pollution:** Products and processes are designed to reduce waste and prevent pollution from the outset.
2. **Keeping Products and Materials in Use:** This focuses on maximizing the utility and lifespan of products through recycling, repairing, refurbishing, and reusing. For example, instead of discarding a broken item, it can be fixed or repurposed.
3. **Regenerating Natural Systems:** A circular economy operates in harmony with nature by enhancing ecosystems and replenishing resources. This includes using renewable energy and biodegradable materials, which can safely return to the environment without causing harm.

Benefits of a Circular Economy:

- **Environmental Protection:** Reduces resource extraction and environmental degradation by cutting down waste and pollution.
- **Economic Growth:** New business models such as product-as-a-service, sharing platforms, and reverse logistics (recycling and refurbishing) create economic opportunities.
- **Resource Efficiency:** Less reliance on finite resources and more emphasis on renewables and recyclable materials, helping to mitigate resource scarcity.
- **Job Creation:** Sectors like recycling, remanufacturing, and product life extension often require human skills, contributing to employment growth.

Implementation Examples:

- **Circular Product Design:** Companies like Fairphone design modular smartphones where parts can be replaced or upgraded, reducing the need for a new device. These smartphones are even designed so that one can repair them on one's own. The company also provides spare parts for this purpose.
- **Resource Recovery:** Circular supply chains where waste from one industry (e.g., textile scraps) becomes a resource for another industry (e.g., insulation materials). Another example was recently featured in the BBC article "[Business creating onion skin packaging to reduce waste](#)", where a company is looking into using onion skins (a waste product) to make paper and plastic

packaging for food, which is less energy and resource intensive, as well as reduces the need to use plastics to wrap food.

Challenges:

- **Transition Costs:** Moving from a linear to a circular system can be costly for businesses initially.
- **Consumer Behaviour:** Encouraging people to prioritize long-lasting, repairable products over cheaper, disposable options can be difficult.
- **Infrastructure:** Developing systems to support recycling, refurbishment, and reuse at scale requires significant investment and coordination. However, some countries, like Austria, have taken steps to address this by offering anyone with residency in Austria a 'Repair Bonus' on electrical appliances and bicycles, in which the government pays up to half of the repairment costs (up to €200). This not only encourages people to repair what they have, but also seeks to create jobs in the repair industry. There will be two representatives from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Climate Action at the Peer Learning Platform, who would be happy to explain more.

In essence, the circular economy reimagines the production and consumption process to promote sustainability, reduce environmental impact, and ensure economic resilience through smarter use of resources.

The Role of Civil Society in Advancing the Circular Economy in the European Union

Transitioning from a linear to a circular economy model is an essential contribution to the European Union's efforts to develop a sustainable, low-carbon, resource efficient, resilient and cooperative economy. In this effort, civil society plays a crucial role. Although the concept is not new, it has gained momentum with the publication of the first Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) in 2015, followed by the adoption of the new CEAP in 2020 as a key component of the European Green Deal.

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), representing civil society in Europe, has issued a number of advisory opinions on legislative and non-legislative measures relating to the circular economy in Europe. Most notably, in response to the European Commission's first CEAP, the EESC proposed to create a European circular economy platform from stakeholders for stakeholders in one of its opinions. This led to the launch of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP) in 2017, a stakeholder platform that brings together stakeholders and civil society from the public or private sectors involved in resource efficiency.

Advisory Council views on Circular Economy

There is a widening gap between scientific understanding of material throughput and current circular economy policies. Material throughput (direct exploitation, pollution, waste) is the main cause of the degradation of ecosystem services. Material consumption is growing rapidly, and recycling alone is not enough.

There are trade-offs between climate policy and circular economy. Just few human activities cause the huge majority of material throughput: 1) building; 2) food production; 3) mobility/transport; and 4) energy production.

OECD – The Role of Cities and Regions in the Transition to a Circular Economy

Being the places where people live and work, consume and dispose, cities and regions play a fundamental role in the transition to the circular economy. By 2050, the global population is estimated to reach 9 billion people, 55% of which will be living in cities. The pressure on natural resources will increase, while new infrastructure, services and housing will be needed. Already, cities represent almost two-thirds of global energy demand, produce up to 50% of solid waste and are responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions. However, cities and regions are also part of the solution, as they are responsible for key policies in local public services such as transport, solid waste, water and energy that affect citizens' well-being, economic growth and environmental quality.

Since 2019, the OECD Programme on the Circular Economy in Cities and Regions supports national and subnational governments in their transition towards the circular economy through evidence-based analysis, multi-stakeholder dialogues, tailored recommendations and customised action plans.

Chapter 5: Good Practice Cases in Implementing Circular Economy Policies

This chapter is devoted to the Exchange Space 2 on Good Practice Cases in Implementing Circular Economy Policies. As is the case with chapter 3 and Exchange Space 1, this chapter provides short introductions to the good practice cases. The format remains the same as Exchange Space 1. However, participants will only be able to visit three out of the four tables. This will then end with a quick summary by each table lead, so even if one was not able to go to each table, one will still receive a good summary of the discussions that took place.

Romania – Transition to a Circular Economy

This Exchange Space will discuss the Romanian transition to circular economy and governance structure which has already been put in place, the Circular Economy Strategy and the 52 short-, medium- and long-term actions in the Action Plan. In addition, this presentation will also focus on the financing aspects in relation to circular economy.

Finland – Circular Economy Green Deal

Finland's Circular Economy Green Deal is a voluntary commitment in which the participating organisations commit to reducing their use of natural resources and setting effective goals, and to taking actions that promote a low-carbon circular economy. The actions must support the objectives concerning natural resources laid down in the [Circular Economy Programme](#), carbon neutrality and the achievement of a sustainable economy by 2035. The commitments aim to reduce the use of raw materials, extend the useful life of materials and products, increase the supply of options that cause less burden on the environment and strengthen the natural capital, and develop new operational and business models that are in line with a circular economy. The Green Deal is intended for companies, sectoral organisations, municipalities and regions.

This exchange space explores the potential of this kind of voluntary commitments and other similar actions in boosting the circular transition. What is their relation to legislation aiming to reach similar goals? What are the experiences of countries / actors of legislation as well as voluntary actions?

European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform

In 2017, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) joined forces with the European Commission to create the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP). The idea behind the initiative was to connect stakeholders and facilitate dialogue on the circular economy. Stakeholders – civil society organisations, business and trade union representatives, think tanks and public bodies – commit to improving Europe's resource efficiency. Together, they identify challenges and bottlenecks that hinder the advancement of the circular economy concept.

Since the outset, ECESP has been a European success story supporting European companies and other stakeholders by promoting a circular transition. As a "network of networks", ECESP goes beyond purely sectoral activities to highlight cross-sector opportunities. It provides a meeting place where stakeholders can share and scale up effective solutions and address specific challenges. The Platform bridges initiatives

at local, regional and national level, and supports the implementation of the circular economy. The Platform is crucial as it channels stakeholders' voices into the EU legislative process. ECESP's flagship events, the #EUCircularTalks and the Annual Conference, are opportunities to consult the circular economy community and gather input on the challenges faced. The Platform has also become an essential global actor in the circular economy, inspiring similar initiatives and contributing to international events like the World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) in Kigali (December 2022) and in Brussels (April 2024), the World Expo in Dubai (in 2020), as well as the climate and biodiversity COP conferences.

Luxembourg – Climate Pact for Municipalities

Since the integration of circular economy in the Luxembourgish Climate Pact for municipalities, the interest for the topic has steadily gained momentum at the local and regional level. Through concrete measures, tools, and expert support, the number of best practices has surged, reflecting the growing commitment to sustainability and resource efficiency among municipalities.

This presentation will explore how circular economy has been introduced practically on a local level, the ongoing support for its implementation, and the success stories already shaping a more circular future.