

CIRCULAR ECONOMY HUBS

IMPLEMENTED D.T1.3.3

CIRCULAR ECONOMY HUBS IMPLEMENTED:
UDINE

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D.T1.3.3: CIRCULAR ECONOMY HUBS IMPLEMENTED: UDINE

A.T1.3 Concept for the implementation of a circular economy hub/accelerator

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1. Introduction

After completing the deliverables (for each region) related to

- the creation of the working group (D.T1.1.3 and D.T1.2.3),
- the two strategy workshops (D.T1.2.11)
- the drafting of the joint circular economy strategy (D.T1.2.8)

And in compliance with the final objective of the project to favour the transition towards a more sustainable and innovative economy, the deliverable D.T1.3.3 stands as a necessary step for the creation of a HUB for the circular economy in the territory of Udine and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

In concrete terms this deliverable offers a first basis for the implementation of this facilitator office.

2. Hub concept

2.1 Legal form

For Udine and Friuli Venezia Giulia the idea is to set up a new legal entity for carrying out activities related to the hub. Following the drafting of the strategy for the circular economy for Udine and Friuli Venezia Giulia, it was decided to identify in the coming months those subjects belonging to the working group (D.T1.2.3) who have the interest and the will to collaborate in the creation of the HUB for the circular economy.

The most promising hypothesis is to form a non-profit association that can coordinate the HUB's activity, which would take the form of a virtual platform connected to various "centres of competence" in the area. This legal form would ensure a certain simplicity for the creation of the HUB. In addition to this, as will be seen below, obtaining legal personality will be very important.

2.2 Structure

The idea is to set up a combination of online services and physical offices. On the one hand we want to create an online platform in which we insert a series of services ranging from generic information to knowledge base material; on the other the presence of physical offices that will offer more specific services according to the user's needs.

More in detail the essential information that need to be contained in the online platform are:

- The main contacts.
- News about virtuous initiatives related to the circular economy and the sustainable development.
- The presentation of regional case studies, but not only.
- Reports relating to the achievement of the objectives set within this strategy.
- Useful announcements in order to encourage match-making.



Regarding physical places the idea for our territory is to provide different offices, each of which can respond to specific needs. In fact, in addition to this virtual platform, we also want to offer users (companies and citizens) the possibility of receiving support at physical offices, each specialized in a specific topic. The members of the stakeholder group who want to participate in this collaboration, and which will have the required skills within their organizations, will be able to take part in this network of competence centres. The active members will be different and each will take care of the subjects it masters (e.g. APE FVG will be able to deal with energy consultancy related to the circular economy).

2.3 How to finance the hub

As anticipated, it will be vital to make the hub economically self-sufficient. To this end, one possibility could be to provide four types of main revenue:

1. Membership fees.
2. Remuneration of the services offered.
3. National or regional contributions.
4. Participation in national and international projects (Interreg program, LIFE program, etc.).

Particular relevance, especially for the last point, is the obtaining of the legal personality. Only in this way it will be possible to present and participate in the projects as a single subject. Again, with regard to participation in various types of projects, it will be necessary to have professional figures within the hub who are competent in preparing funding applications and managing projects.

2.4 Services

A fundamental aspect of the hub will be the services it can offer. some examples may be:

- **Creating awareness and sharing knowledge:** To stimulate citizens and businesses to become more circular and sustainable, the Hub should share knowledge on the advantages deriving from the adoption of strategies and practices relating to the circular economy and sustainable development. To do this, the case studies or the stories of the entrepreneurs already committed in this sense may be particularly useful. These contributions can be collected within the web platform and can be advertised through face-to-face events. It will also be useful to publish the latest news in the circular economy (European communications, scientific publications, etc.).
- **Match-making:** Analyzing other examples of hubs in Europe, it is clear that one of the main tasks of this type of organization is the matchmaking. The hub will therefore have to act as a link between the various subjects, private and otherwise, with an interest in creating possible symbiosis. A useful tool in this sense could be the web platform itself, which should contain a section dedicated to collecting any collaboration opportunities (for example, think of a company that wants to sell its by-product: it could publish on the web platform the technical characteristics of its material in order to search for possible buyers).



- Support to companies: this support must be aimed at following companies through a process of transition or efficiency improvement of their production. This support can also be translated into a concrete help in preparation of pilot projects or access to funding channels. The possibility of using external experts must certainly be taken into consideration. In fact, in the event that within the hub there were not the necessary skills to solve any problems, the staff must be able to direct users to those subjects or entities that can offer that type of support.
- Support for citizens: it will also be essential to promote a direct connection with citizenship. For example, all those initiatives related to the reuse or refurbished products market will have to be supported.
- Connection between companies and the world of research and development: as previously highlighted, a fundamental role will be attributed to the university world. It will therefore be essential to create a bridge between the business world and the academic world (an example already reported is that of hackathons).

3. Internationalization

Through possible international collaborations (eg: projects financed by the Interreg-Central Europe program) it is also possible to hypothesize the creation of a synergy with other similar initiatives at European level.

4. Short term perspective

In a first phase, as anticipated, the most suitable subjects will have to be identified to give substance to this HUB concept. This idea will then have to be realized with a pilot HUB able to prove its usefulness in order to facilitate its financing. The coordination role could be taken by APE FVG and the Municipality of Udine, at least in the short period.

In this regard, APE FVG has recently applied to join the ATS DIH - Udine "Data analytics and Artificial intelligence". This ATS represents one of the nodes of the Digital Innovation HUB IP4FVG (Industry Platform 4 Friuli Venezia Giulia), which operates on the regional territory for the development of digital solutions. It is believed that the inclusion of APE FVG within this platform can bring important benefits with a view to creating a HUB for the circular economy. The will is in fact to generate a strong synergy between these two initiatives.

5. Mid-term perspective

Once this HUB will be more consolidated and more mature, it will be possible to try to develop it further thanks to the participation in European projects capable of promoting its internationalization. At this point would be ideal to pass the coordination from the CITYCIRCLE partners to the Regione Autonoma Friuli Venezia Giulia in order to give to this network of competence centres greater visibility and authority on the territory.