

Unpacking the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, E-Workshop 3: Circular Economy

The sessions' recording is available [here](#) and the presentation slides can be viewed [here](#).

Summary of Q&A after the presentation “OECD support towards a Circular Economy in the Western Balkans” by Jovana Pavlovic Djukic, OECD

1. Are there any links or cooperation with the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) related to their activities on the Green Agenda and more specifically on circular economy?

Yes, OECD provides inputs to papers and documents produced by the RCC, as for example for the regional action plan to combat plastic pollution. OECD has also been part of the working group meetings on the industrial sector as well as for the Green Agenda.

2. Regarding recycling and its viability: there is possibly a long-term issue with the perpetuation of the waste to be recycled; While recycling is relevant, are there also measures to avoid the waste production?

Both in the Circular Economy Roadmap Report and in the Outlook Report, OECD advocates for waste prevention and the full life-cycle management of materials.

3. Is there any progress with the implementation in Albania or North Macedonia after providing them the CE Roadmap report? / Is there a project/program to coordinate several projects from donors/agencies in this field (CE) in Albania?

In Albania, a latest development is the submission of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Scheme to public consultation. It was proposed by OECD as short-term measure within the economic instrument priority area. Albania is also advancing on plastic waste management through regional initiatives and an action plan that shall relate to their national action plan to combat household plastic waste and combat marine littering.

In North Macedonia (NMK) there has been a restructuring in the Ministries for which OECD now works with the Ministry of Industry and Labour on the topic of CE. NMK focuses on the textile sector, for which a Circular Textile Strategy has been proposed. The country's textile cluster supports the development of this strategy, which includes awareness-raising components as well as infrastructure for collection of textile waste. It is a multistakeholder approach (involving academia, businesses, and government). The government envisages inserting circularity criteria in programmes meant to support SMEs becoming green in 2025.

4. What are some of good practices for promoting separation of waste at household level?

OECD features the good practice example Slovenia and of the Slovak Republic, to inspire the CE Roadmap for Albania.

In terms of rural households, waste separation can be facilitated more easily; different types of bins are provided to the population which are then collected with the help of a truck - waste separation can be monitored this way and works well in Slovakia. Another important tool is awareness raising along with a sanction system if rules are not followed. All Western Balkans Economies have waste separation at source. However, the responsibility is with each municipality which requires good collaboration between the municipality and the government level. A good enforcement mechanism can emphasize this.

There is also progress with the improved law on integrated solid waste management aligned with the EU acquis that has been prepared, consulted and is expected to be approved by the Albanian Parliament in February 2025.

Summary after the presentations “GAWB implementation at national level – EU for Green Agenda in Serbia” by Vladimir Jovanovic, UNDP & “Global Eco-Industrial Park II Programme and Sustainable Recycling Industries II” by Philipp Ischer, SECO

Questions to Philipp Ischer

1. Regulation of private and public sector: how are the collaborations with private and public actors of the industrial parks established and how do they function?

SECO is exclusively active in already existing parks, some of them owned by the government and some are private. An Eco-industrial Park Framework has been created by UNIDO, GIZ and the World Bank which has been used by SECO to identify, with which Eco-Parks to collaborate. For cooperation with the public administration, legal frameworks and the institutional setup are particularly relevant. Example: in some countries it is not yet possible to reuse treated wastewater even if the latter is properly treated and safe to use. Accordingly, reuse options are limited despite the presence of technology and infrastructure. Other example: When producing renewable energy within the Eco-Parks it must be verified whether it can be used inside the park only or if can be fed into the grid structure.

Empirically seen, the privately owned parks are usually more active, which is also related to the level of international connection they have. Further points of influence are the norms and regulations in the country and how the national economic situation looks like.

2. Do you think that small and medium size firms (SMEs) have the capacities to get engaged in circular economy?

When it comes to resource efficiency and cleaner production, SMEs can implement this without problems. SECO supports by collaborating with National Cleaner Production Centers to help with assessments for the company and provide support in how to improve resource productivity. An easy entry point for solutions is good housekeeping, which does

not require additional costs for the companies. For larger endeavors requiring higher resources, the main issue with small companies is that investment size is too small such that they do not easily access loans from banks. However, smaller low-investment improvements can be made.

Questions to Vladimir Jovanovic

1. Has there been participatory approaches in the development of policies in the context of UNDP's support to the Green Agenda for Serbia?

UNDP has supported improvement in laws and by-laws in improved waste management and the adoption of environmental strategy. CSOs were always at least involved in the public debate phase. In the development of environmental development strategy for Serbia, CSOs were active members of the working group from the beginning, as well as part of the public debate.

Concluding thoughts by Jean-Christophe Favre

SDC and SECO are both active since the last decades in greening economies. The pressure to act now is much higher. Systemic impact was limited in the past, however now through the urgency of the issue, there is higher leverage to contribute to a systemic impact and shape actions in an articulated, holistic way.

The GAWB allows to get more clarity in delineating SDCs and SECO's agency in a meaningful manner. Coordination between donors remains a field to be worked on, and the GAWB can help to improve coordination and synergies. The GAWB helps by giving a framework to foster green transition in the region. Through the 5 Pillars, the Green Agenda helps coordinate and orchestrate Swiss International Cooperations' and other donors' actions.

Swiss international cooperation has been and will in the near future contribute to support the region regarding circular economy, for example in Serbia, in Bosnia and in North Macedonia. In general, there is a willingness to work systemically towards clear objectives of circular economy. To achieve them, understanding the obstacles and the priorities of companies and governmental stakeholders is key and it is also important to find a convergence among all stakeholder's interests.