

“CHANGE is Just Around the CORNER”: Engaging Stakeholders for a Circular Future

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INTRODUCTION

The ‘Engaged and Entrepreneurial European University as a Driver for European Smart and Sustainable Region’ (E³UDRES²) project involves universities and university colleges from six European countries. Within E³UDRES² the transnational university campus of the future is developed. One of the main challenges for the future is the transition to a circular economy.

Circular economy (CE) has been proposed as a crucial strategy to reduce climate change. A circular economy reduces emissions and material losses by increasing the use of renewable and recyclable resources. Approaches to achieve a circular economy are multitude, such as sharing material and resources, prolonging the life cycle of resources, reusing, redistributing, refurbishing or remanufacturing materials and recycling resources. Several barriers exist in preventing the transition to a circular economy.

Multistakeholder engagement is needed for this transition to be successful. One of the most difficult aspects in the transition process to a circular economy is changing the attitude and decision-making process of stakeholders. There is a need to develop more engaging approaches for sharing information about a circular economy.

The Change Corner, originating from the E³UDRES² consortium, is a transnational space supporting multistakeholder engagement.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Desk research is performed to find out the most appropriate form of the Change Corner Hub (CCH). The CCH concept envisages a virtual, physical or hybrid format across the different regions.

By integrating research methods from implementation science, citizen science, participatory action research and Human Centred Design (HCD), stakeholder barriers and needs concerning the transition to circular economy are explored. Starting from these needs and barriers, the desired impact of stakeholders concerning circular economy in their regions is envisioned in co-creation sessions.

Change Corner consists of transnational and region specific aspects. Photovoice challenges are organised across the regions of E³UDRES². In these photovoice challenges, participants are asked to share pictures of their good practices and barriers concerning the transition to a circular economy.

At the University College Leuven-Limburg in Belgium, a series of lunch lectures are the basis for Change Corner. Good practices from the region are presented to stakeholders in order to inspire action and overcome powerlessness in the face of climate change. During the lunch lectures, barriers and good practices are discussed with participants, resulting in co-created challenges in the transition to a circular economy. Lunch lecture sessions are recorded so that information gathered in the sessions can feed back into the other regions. After the sessions, participants receive a qualitative questionnaire in which individual good practices and barriers are gathered.

RESULTS

A concept is developed of the Change Corner Hub (CCH) by all E³UDRES² project partners in physical or virtual format with different approaches. The CCH is used for information sharing, raising awareness and activities to prepare for future changes, which will take place during the implementation of a circular economy.

Upcoming results will form the basis for future research projects. Within the scope of Change Corner, a method-mix of contextual analysis, co-creation sessions, workshops and photovoice is applied to reach multistakeholder engagement.

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KEYWORDS: Circular economy, Photovoice, Context analysis, Stakeholder engagement, Circular economy hub