

Program Priority: SO1.1 - Improve the framework conditions for innovation in the Alpine Space

Work Package: WPT3 Fostering CE processes in Alpine Space with digitalisation processes

Activity: A.T3.2 Experimenting transnational actions to foster CE approaches through digitalisation

Deliverable: D.T3.2.3 Local actions to implement CE Value recovery approaches with digitalisation processes

Reporting on local pilot actions – Biz-up

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1. Introduction

The purpose of the project and goal of the pilots was the awareness creation and innovation creation of circular economy topics in combination with digitalization. Within the frame of the pilots the aim was to find SMEs and other organisations, that can be lessened and taught into the transition to a more circular and sustainable business. Especially in Upper Austria we do have a big urgency for these topics and the political regulations are somehow faster in implementing than the companies could follow. Therefore, many companies feel the urge to change their current business models into more circular and sustainable ones and fail because of the lack of guidance. Therefore, within CIRCULAR4.0 we focused on finding these companies that are ready to change and guide and assist them in the first steps towards a more sustainable, digital and circular business model. To do so, we have provided circular assessment tools and digital maturity tools for the companies to self-assess themselves and find out their current state of the art and performance in both regards. Afterwards we provided a 1:1 assistance to find and develop solutions and innovations that could support the companies in their process of becoming more digital and circular.

The local actions have been taken place online, due to the COVID-19 restriction. Originally it was planned to create higher value with physical meetings and get together, especially for the 1:1 assistance, however, from autumn on a national lockdown was restricted again and hence we had to change our plans into online formats. Therefore, the assistance was held either on the phone or with MS Teams.

The present deliverable displays for the local pilot action in *(Upper Austria)*:

- activities delivered,
- results achieved,
- lessons learned to foster CE approaches through digitalization.

Eight different companies have been assisted in the frame of the pilots. Three of those are categorized in the electronics sector with producing electronic devices, one is focusing on the mobility sector, one specialized in large engines, one company is a machine producer and three companies are part of the value recovery chain of plastics. All companies have participated in the self-assessment process and filled out the CAS and digital transformation tool (quick check). Following scores were reached:

Company Branch	CAS Score Circular BM Potential	CAS Score commitment to CE transf.	Total CAS Score	Digital transformation Score (Strategy)	Digital transformation Score (Technology)
Large Engines	33.3	24.3	57.6	100%	80%
Plastic packaging	14.6	11.4	26	40%	30%
Plastic recycling	16.7	37.1	53.8	40%	60%
Plastic Recycling	43.8	35.7	79.5	70%	60%

Mobility	16.7	20	36.7	100%	100%
Electronics	10.4	42.9	53.3	80%	80%
Electronics	20.8	18.6	39.4	100%	70%
Machine producer	27.1	21.4	48.5	70%	90%

In the 1:1 assistance possible innovation and strategies were discussed with the participating companies in order to define how the next steps towards a more circular future can look like. For this also financial information was provided to summarize possible funding and investment possibilities for companies.

For this currently a national call opened to finance and fund projects for a circular economy called "FTI Initiative Kreislaufwirtschaft" Therefore during the 1:1 assistance the call was explained and presented as a possible opportunity to collect funds and support R&D activities towards a circular economy.

One of the biggest learnings from the pilots was the current state of companies in regards of circularity. Most of the companies had very advanced positions in terms of digitalization, however the concept of circular economy was mostly very new and rare within the companies. The need was urgent due to the restrictions and laws coming from the government, however companies did not have a plan nor strategy how to tackle the regulations and find themselves in a new

circular world. Furthermore, it has to be stated out that many companies became specialists in optimisation – optimising their products, processes and services is not a challenge at all. However, rethinking and inventing new possible business models, products, processes and services turned out to be an immense challenge for almost all companies. The willingness for huge change is quite minimal and the trust in how bendable technology is as well. This led to many challenges within the 1:1 assistance or to convince companies to be part of the pilots in the first place.

2. Local pilot actions in Upper Austria (Biz-up) - Overview

Local context and CE approach

We will leave it sector open, which means that even SMEs that do not work in those specific sectors selected in the beginning of the project can be part of the pilot if there is space for them. The CE approach we are focusing on is value recovery, however we will also include the circular design approach slightly within the pilot, as it is essential for an optimal value recovery. Often the argument comes up that a proper value recovery is only possible when the product itself had a circular design in the first place.

Methodology

3 Modules shall serve the proper training for our SMEs. The modules are structured as following:

MODULE 1 - Raise Awareness for CE supported by digitalization (community building)

MODULE 2 - Understanding the Business Case of CE and Finance & Investment

MODULE 3 – Circular business strategies in specific sectors (sector specific training)

Expected results

The main benefit for the SMEs is to raise awareness of the opportunities of circular economy through information events at the beginning. With that we introduce the SMEs into the whole world of circular economy and with best practices we state how business have been introduced before and successfully implemented circular strategies already. Within the 1:1 consulting we provide explicit business model canvas and digital maturity assessments for the SMEs in order to state their current challenges but also possible opportunities. Within the last workshop together with all participants we will use design thinking techniques to elaborate possible next steps and measures in order to become more circular and support the transition with means of digitalization.

3. Identification and involvement of the SMEs for the Pilot Action

We have invited companies to participate with our newsletter and on our website. We did not offer consultancy, nor provided an event, therefore the de minimis rules did not apply for us. The 1:1 assistance was kept low with only a phone call or a MS Teams meeting.

Wie fit ist Ihr Unternehmen in der Kreislaufwirtschaft und in der Digitalisierung?



Machen Sie einen Selbsttest! Im Interreg Alpine Space EU Projekt **CIRCULAR4.0** wurden zwei einfache Bewertungstools entwickelt, mit denen Unternehmen ihre Reifegrade in Kreislaufwirtschaft und Digitalisierung schnell ermitteln können.

Wie fit ist Ihr Unternehmen? © Dazbay

„Das Wissen über den Status quo der heimischen Unternehmen ist ein wichtiger Meilenstein, um zielgerichtet Innovationen voranzutreiben, die Unternehmen bei der Umstellung auf zirkuläre und digitale Prozesse unterstützen“, erklärt Ashna Mudaffer. Die Projektmanagerin im Cleantech-Cluster betreut das Projekt in der 00

Standortagentur Business Upper Austria. „Wir würden uns deshalb sehr freuen, wenn uns Unternehmen ihre Ergebnisse des Self-Assessments für eine anonymisierte Auswertung zur Verfügung zu stellen.“

Hier finden Sie das Assessment zur Ermittlung ihres Circular Economy Scores:

[->> Circularity Assessment Score 2.0](#)

(Achtung: Die Ergebnisemails landen oft im SPAM)

Hier finden Sie das Assessment zur Ermittlung Ihres digitalen Reifegrades:

[->> Quick-Check](#)

Senden Sie die Ergebnisse dazu einfach per Mail an ashna.mudaffer@biz-uo.at. Die Daten werden absolut vertraulich behandelt.

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04.05.2022
4. Nachhaltigkeitsbrunch "ESG-Berichterstattung: Nicht nur reden - sondern tun! Wie?"

12.05.2022
Kurz-Trainingsseminar "Klimafreundliche Kühlung von Wohngebäuden"

17.05.2022
Kurz-Trainingsseminar

4. Implementation report

1:1 Assistance	Start date	03.2022
	End date	04.2022
Description Describe here the activity as it was implemented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been done – CAS and digital maturity assessment, brainstorming and creative thinking for developing ideas and innovations to improve the circular performance, recommendations for financing and fund possibilities • When – 28.03; 31.03; 01.04; 05.04; 06.04; 13.04 • By Whom – Biz Up • How many SMEs were involved/did benefit? 8 Add sub-activities if necessary		

Results		
Please list below the results achieved, including the items available for documentation of the results (those items shall be put in the annexes to the deliverable).		
8 1:1 Assistance including the circular assessment and digital maturity assessment. After the assessment's recommendations for improvement and financial recommendations have been given.	Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28.03; 31.03; 01.04; 05.04; 06.04; 13.04
Documentation (whatever relevant and needed):		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidential 		
8 CE+digital maturity assessments of SMEs	Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 28.03; 31.03; 01.04; 05.04; 06.04; 13.04
Documentation:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of SMEs having performed an assessment Overview of the results 		
Deviations – corrective measures (as occurring)		
Please describe and explain below the deviations compare to the initial plan:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delays – a huge delay took place in the pilots because of the COVID lockdown that began in September 2021 in Austria, the waves of infections cause cautiousness within the companies and therefore the participation rate was although we switched to online quite low Significant changes in the activities (activities cancelled, new ones) – the workshops were cancelled due to the Covid wave of infections that was ongoing until end of March. Planning physical but also online events was almost impossible, since almost every 3rd person in Austria was infected by Covid at some point. Therefore, many companies cancelled meetings and agreements. Explain corrective measures taken (if any) The pilots got much more simplified than initially planned within this project. The entire assistance was switched to phone calls or MS Teams calls in order to be able to reach companies. The pilot got reduced to the Assessments and the 1:1 assistance. 		

5. Deviations from the pilot action plan (D.T3.1)

A huge delay took place in the pilots because of the COVID lockdown that began in September 2021 in Austria, the waves of infections cause cautiousness within the companies and therefore

the participation rate was although we switched to online quite low. The workshops were cancelled due to the Covid wave of infections that was ongoing until end of March. Planning physical but also online events was almost impossible, since almost every 3rd person in Austria was infected by Covid at some point. Therefore, many companies cancelled meetings and agreements.

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6. Communication activities implemented to support the pilot action

The invitations were spread in the Cleantech-Cluster networks in order to generate public appearance and motivate companies to participate. Therefore, the cluster homepage was used, which is visible for the public with about 30 clicks a day, the newsletter that is sent out to all our partners, reaching about 200 companies and organisations and posted on our social media channel that includes 948 Followers.

Many companies reached out to the public invitation and contacted the responsible project manager for closer information and application requirements. Furthermore, the project and pilots was promoted in other cluster´s events and activities to increase the attention and reach a higher number of participants.

7. Summary of the achievements - lessons learnt

Achievements

- Milestone(s) achievement analysis:
 - Quantitative (KPIs) – 8 out of 20
 - Qualitative: less than planned, as planned, better than planned – less than planned

Lessons learnt

The response of the companies was not very satisfying. Some companies did call for more information about the pilots but decided afterwards to not be part of it. Some agreed on participating and then cancelled afterwards due to too much work. We can only assume why companies were not ready to participate but we think that three major factors were the reason, why companies were not able to be motivated in participating in the pilots and to learn how to become more circular.

1. COVID-Crisis – many of our regional companies do still struggle with the issues of the entire crisis. Resources are expensive or hard to get, transportation is still considered as problematic and the extremely high infection rate from January until end of March caused many

downtimes in production and offices. Employees were constantly on sick leave due to quarantine and therefore not reachable. Including our own organisation.

2. War in Ukraine – The war in Ukraine effected Austria immensely in terms of resources, energy and transportation. Companies were busy trying to find ways on how to keep their business going and therefore did not have much interest in exploiting new and challenging business models. The importance of the entire digitalization and circular economy topic got lost in the shadow of the crisis.

3. The little knowledge and education about Circular Economy – despite for the plastics industry, not many companies in the region have ever heard of Circular Economy. In our organisations as project partners we are extremely aware of the topic and due to the bubble, that we work in, we get the perception the entire world knows about circular economy. However, in reality many companies have never heard of the topic and do not show much interested to learn about it. Therefore, it was extremely hard to find organisations, that were ready to exploit the world of Circular economy and assess within their own organisation.

A learning out of this is, that the project activities originally planned should be able to be changed more flexible and crisis and unpredictable situations and actions should be considered and discussed in the entire project team. The activities should have been adapted more to the current situation especially in Austria

8. Annex

Communication

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Overview of companies assisted

ID° (partner acronym +no.)	Company type	Company Region	Sector of reference	CE maturity assessment	CE maturity assessment tool	Digital maturity assessment	DM assessment tool	1:1 meeting	Action Plan
Bizup01	Enterprise	Salzburg	Electronics	31.03.2022	CAS4.0	31.03.2022	Digital transformation tool quick check	31.03.2022	
Bizup02	Enterprise	Upper Austria	Packaging/Plastics	01.04.2022	CAS4.0	01.04.2022	Digital transformation tool quick check	01.04.2022	
Bizup03	SME	Leoben	Plastic recycling	05.04.2022	CAS4.0	05.04.2022	Digital transformation tool quick check	05.04.2022	
Bizup04	SME	Upper Austria	Plastic Recycling	05.04.2022	CAS4.0	05.04.2022	Digital transformation tool quick check	05.04.2022	
Bizup05	Enterprise	Upper Austria	Mobility	31.03.2022	CAS4.0	31.03.2022	Digital transformation tool quick check	31.03.2022	
Bizup06	SME	Upper Austria	Electronics/IT	05.04.2022	CAS4.0	06.04.2022	Digital transformation tool quick check	06.04.2022	
Bizup07	Enterprise	Wuppertal	Electronics	06.04.2022	CAS4.0	06.04.2022	Digital transformation tool quick check	13.04.2022	
Bizup08	Enterprise	Upper Austria	Machinery	29.03.2022	CAS4.0	29.03.2022	Digital transformation tool quick check	29.03.2022	