

Citizen Involvement in Circular Economy Implementation

CECI
Interreg Europe

 European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



CECI Action Plan

August 2022 – July 2023

PP6 - BAA

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Circular economy is still a new approach for Bulgaria. Bulgaria still does not have a national strategy for circular economy implementation and only a Concept on applying circular economy is existing at national level that is even not officially approved yet. Some single companies or cities apply few separate measures but generally the CE approach is still unknown. On the other hand Bulgaria still has one of the highest levels of waste disposal in the EU. With the alarming rise of waste and carbon emissions, effective waste management is critical to reducing the impact of economic activities on the environment and a step towards implementation of CE. Having in mind that there are no strategic documents at regional and national level for the support of CE BAA selected the Varna municipality Waste management strategy as the policy instrument to be tackled by CECI project. The Strategy itself does not have financial instruments but is the planning base for the Municipality annual budget so the aim of the complex of the Action plan activities is to enlarge the scope of the Strategy with the inclusion of circular economy measures and to ensure the involvement of citizens through different measures into circular economy implementation.

This Action plan is based on the experience gained within the project CECI from the process of interregional learning between partners. The activities are inspired by good practices across CECI partnership and some ideas and measures implemented by partners that are not enlisted as good practices but have been identified during partnership events and meetings. The Action plan was consulted with over 300 different representatives of different stakeholders from Varna area, mainly citizens, and will be submitted for approval to the Municipal Council of Varna, owner of the tackled policy instrument.

The proposal includes actions that are in line with the current situation, the need for increasing the role of circular economy in the city of Varna, the measures already taken, the planned measures as well as the strategic documents in response to the crisis at European and national level. The main reason for making the proposal for the selected actions is the understanding that citizens will be the main players in diminishing the waste generated at the place of consumption which will be the first step to the control over the waste generation. In fact, Varna city is still lagging seriously in terms of achieving progress related to penetration of circular economy approaches in private and public sector and regarding the habits and practices of the citizens.

The proposal is also related to the philosophy, content, and measures from the suggestion for the National Strategy for transition to the circular economy 2021-2027 (draft version from 2020, the last one available, that is still under elaboration and final approval).

2 GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Project: CECI**
- **Partner organisation: Business Agency Association – PP6**
- **Country: BULGARIA**
- **NUTS2 region: СЕВЕРОИЗТОЧЕН (SEVEROIZTOCHEN)**
- **Contact person 1: Silvia Stumpf,**
- **EMAIL : vba@vba.bg**
- **TELEPHONE : +359 887 389999**

3 POLICY CONTEXT

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

Waste Management Program of Varna Municipality 2015-2020

(Стратегия за управление на на отпадъците на Община Варна)

Name of additional policy instruments addressed:

1. **Waste Management Program of Varna Municipality 2015-2020 - Regulation for waste management on the territory of Varna municipality (VARNA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL - Adopted by Decision № 790-6-1, taken with Protocol № 22 of 10.12.2021 of the Municipal Council – Varna) (НАРЕДБА за управление на отпадъците на територията на община**

Варна, ОБЩИНСКИ СЪВЕТ ВАРНА, Приета с Решение № 790-6-1, взето с Протокол № 22 от 10.12.2021 г. на Общински съвет - гр. Варна)

4 ABOUT THE ACTION PLAN

The proposal for Action plan is based on the experience gained within the project from the process of interregional learning and was consulted with over 300 different representatives of different stakeholders from Varna area, mainly citizens.

The proposal includes actions that are in line with the current situation, the need for increasing the role of circular economy in the city of Varna, the measures already taken, the planned measures as well as the strategic documents in response to the crisis at European and national level. The main reason for making the proposal for the selected actions is the understanding that citizens will be the main players in diminishing the waste generated at the place of consumption which will be the first step to the control over the waste generation. In fact, Varna city is still lagging seriously in terms of achieving progress related to penetration of circular economy approaches in private and public sector and regarding the habits and practices of the citizens.

The proposal is also related to the philosophy, content, and measures from the suggestion for the National Strategy for transition to the circular economy 2021-2027 (draft version from 2020, the last one available, that is still under elaboration and final approval).

4.1 BACKGROUND

Circular economy is still a new approach for Bulgaria. Bulgaria still has one of the highest levels of waste disposal in the EU - 70 percent in 2016 and 62 percent in 2017, compared to the EU average of about 24 percent. In 2017, 3 million tons of household waste, 185 thousand tons of hazardous waste and about 17 million tons of non-hazardous waste were generated in Bulgaria. In 2018, household waste is about 2.9 million tons, hazardous - 281 thousand tons and non-hazardous - 19 million tons. Waste treatment measures and activities, incl. of plastic, are focused mainly on the generated waste in the phase of its decommissioning and less on actions to reduce and prevent their formation -

this reduces the effectiveness of the policy pursued. The national target of 40 percent for recycling of household waste, set in the legislation for 2018, has not been reached (only 31% achieved), which is far from the aim of 50% for 2020. There is even a reduction in the recycling of household waste by 3 percent in 2018 compared to 2017. The level of recycling of household waste in Bulgaria is significantly lower than the EU average - 46 percent. Efforts need to be focused on recycling, whereby waste materials are processed into products, materials or substances for their original purpose.

To reach even the current mandatory 50% recycling target by 2020, Bulgaria needs to increase its share of recycled waste four times faster than the current 1% per year. Bulgaria has to shift the course to intensive segregation at source, coupled with a "household waste" fee according to the quantity and extended deposit system for bottles of beverages and other packages. Significant benefits from the full implementation of EU waste legislation, including the opening of between 16,500 and 29,000 new jobs in Bulgaria, as well as 72 billion euros per year of savings from avoided environmental and health damage in Europe, will be lost if Bulgaria continues to be slow in applying the circular economy approach.

As an EU member, Bulgaria has legal obligations to implement directives and a package of measures to reduce waste. And if these legal obligations towards waste are not brought in line, the municipalities, including the Municipality of Varna, will have to pay fines, which will affect the amount of fees for "household waste" due from citizens. These fines are quite real, with some older Member States paying fines for inappropriate waste management. In Bulgaria, recycling is less than 20%, and the goal is to be up to 55% by 2030. Due to the fact that Bulgaria has lower recycling rates than other countries, it enjoys a 5-year grace period, which means that by 2035 Bulgaria must achieve this 65% of recycled waste.

According to the latest European waste policies, up to 65-70% of waste is set to be recycled, and landfills for municipal waste are reduced to about 10% for municipal waste. At present, Bulgaria relies mainly on landfills. However, separate waste collection (20% on average in Bulgaria), which requires differentiated collection systems, is not a sufficient condition for a drastic reduction in landfilled waste. Bulgaria spends an average of 0.62% of GDP per year on waste management for the period 2015-2019. This is one of the highest percentages spent on waste among EU countries and is almost twice as high as the expenditures of the Baltic republics and Romania. The data show that

Bulgaria has higher waste management costs compared to the countries in the region. The costs for waste management are a significant expenditure part of the budget of the Municipality of Varna.

Landfilling as a method of waste disposal still has the largest relative share in the treatment of municipal waste, so the reduction of waste at the place of generation is an effective method. The ideal goal pursued by the European Union is 96.7% recycled waste. The set goal of the EU with the latest current policies is to reduce landfills from one person per year to 10 kg compared to 423 kg of waste per capita for 2018 in Bulgaria.

The new European rules aim to limit landfills and ensure that from 2030 landfills do not accept waste suitable for recycling or other types of recovery, in particular for household waste.

In addition to increasing the recycling rate, it is necessary to minimize the dumping of waste by each person. Therefore, it is extremely important for citizens in the municipalities to be informed and trained about the possibilities for reducing the amount of landfilled waste from the place of collection - homes, the need to recover non-recyclable waste, extending the life cycle of products, the benefits of re- use, repair, exchange and sharing.

Despite being the first circular economy principle, waste prevention is not sufficiently considered in Varna. Cities in Bulgaria like Varna must abide the waste target laws but they aren't currently promoting prevention practices. Of the Bulgarian population 75% live in cities, Varna is the 3rd largest city. Involvement of citizens is a solution to minimise the leakage of materials from the linear economy to answer the new requirements for optimizing systems rather than components, away from 'Resource to Waste' to resilient and productive circular systems, for intensifying the green growth introducing new circular initiatives and business models. It is necessary to build a new understanding of the life cycle of products and take a wider and creative look at the possibilities for sharing, reuse and recycling by the citizens of Varna as main stakeholders in the city waste production ecosystem. More emphasis needs to be placed on topics such as resource efficiency and sustainable development, to create a debate and to promote the innovation potential of circular economy for the sustainable future of the city.

REASONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- WMP relies on a linear business model there is a need to introduce a holistic perspective on circular economy
- Need for adoption of a new business model based on value and material recovery and aimed at boosting higher waste recycling rates
- Missing focus at the opportunities the circular economy offers while involving citizens
- Need for measures for a better collaboration between municipality, business and citizens to achieve a favourable environment that encourages sustainable circular practices, business and economic growth
- Lack of specific sub-programs with activities related to citizens involvement in circular economy as an important pillar for the development of sustainability municipal policies.
- Preparatory work needed for a new collection plan based on the approach 'From waste to resources'.

4.2 POLICY CONTEXT

Municipal authorities understand the need for a complete change in the mentality of citizens and in people's awareness of the problems. It is in the active involvement of citizens that they see the leadership role of local authorities in this process. However, the efforts of municipalities and city governments are not enough. An effective approach to the green transition requires the broad inclusion of topics in the educational process and the cultivation of skills for responsible attitude towards the environment. The EU's progress in implementing the circular economy is not a homogeneous process, but the projects provide an opportunity to expand cooperation and intensify the exchange of good practices. The green transition also poses a challenge to the labour market, whose planning must be long-term and qualification-oriented for the benefit of the local economy. One of the biggest risks lies in skepticism and ignorance of the benefits of the circular economy. Therefore, we propose that the Municipality plan measures to convince citizens of the benefits of the circular economy.

The Action plan aims at tackling the Waste Management Program of City of Varna 2015-2020.

The Waste Management Program of City of Varna 2015-2020 (WMP) is the municipal level policy for periodically analyzing, forecasting and planning the development of city waste management systems, aiming to improve governance of waste in line with the waste hierarchy. Part of its main goal is "improving the efficiency of waste utilization as a resource". The specific Strategic aim 4: "Turning the citizens a key player in implementing the waste management hierarchy" is in focus. However, within this aim the accent is put mainly on campaigns related to the separate collection of waste.

Due to COVID-19 outbreak Varna Council limited its physical meetings and succeeded to organise only online gatherings. On the other hand, no tender procedure for a new Waste management strategy for 2021-2027 seems to be open so far. Even the Strategy is planned for a period that ended, it has been amended and is still on place and operational and supported by a "Regulation for waste management on the territory of Varna municipality". We plan all actions to be submitted to the policy owner as an improvement of the working document but also as an input for the additional strategic documents

In the period 2022-2027 the program that will replace the policy instrument that is tackled - Waste Management Program of Varna Municipality 2022-2027 - is still not under elaboration. We aim at realising the actions within the existing policy program.

4.3 KNOWLEDGE APPLIED FROM CECI

Partner practice/experience (please, detail: practice name, short description and location)	How this good practice/experience has contributed to the actions developed in your Action Plan (detail any transfers, full or partial of good practice)
Citizen participation and municipal decision making in Lahti, Finland	<p>The practice is an example on how to mobilise citizens for participatory budgeting (PB) as a democratic decision-making process where ordinary people decide how to spend public funds related to circular economy initiatives. It will be used as an inspiration for a similar initiative in Varna.</p>
REUSE Centre Ostrava, Czech Republic	<p>The Reuse Centre good practice gives an example to Varna on how to set up a joint project of the City of Varna and a waste company from Varna. The REUSE Centre sells second-hand items that the citizens have donated such as used furniture and other functional household items (tools, toys, books, sports equipment etc, except electrical appliances). The Centre is also engaged in educational activities aimed at waste prevention and reuse, organizing lectures, workshops, or swaps on this topic. The good practice will be transferred in full in Varna within Action 3.</p>
Modern recycling centre, implementing economy and sustainability from Etelä-Suomi, Finland	<p>Patina is a recycling centre, a second-hand store, and offers on-the-job training programs, which promotes citizen involvement in sharing economy. The good practice is also included in the suggestion for projects to be funded under the Action 3.</p>
Sharing economy library in the rural area of Päijät-Häme, Finland	<p>Asikkala library puts into circulation tools to better serve the needs of residents while adapting citizens to the sharing economy in</p>

Partner practice/experience (please, detail: practice name, short description and location)	good good short How this good practice/experience has contributed to the actions developed in your Action Plan (detail any transfers, full or partial of good practice)
	<p>rural communities. The good practice promotes cooperation and low-carbon practices as it experiments on new operating models for municipal libraries, implementing sharing and service economy in rural regions. The service pilots in rural Päijät-Häme and conveys information and possibilities about sharing economy. The stakeholders of the project are the municipality of Asikkala and the communal library of Asikkala, while citizens act as beneficiaries. The practice will be included into the list of new possible projects of Action 3.</p>
<p>REKOLA – sharing bicycles</p>	<p>REKOLA - (Kola means Bikes) for fast movements around the city. It was created with the idea that each city deserves its own shared bike system. REKOLA was created in 2013 with the idea that each city deserves its own shared bike system. More than 2000 bikes were in operation and could be used by over 250,000 registered users. In summer 2020, over 4,500 borrowings per day were realized. The specific organisation and rental service model will be transferred. The good practice will be included in the Action 3.</p>
<p>Stroom: an urban living lab on everyday (wo)men's circular consumption</p>	<p>Some specific ideas of the practice will be included into REKOLA concept (for the e-cargobike and for the living lab).</p>
<p>Päijät-Häme Roadmap towards Circular Economy</p>	<p>This Roadmap is not included into the good practices but has been introduced to CECI</p>

Partner practice/experience (please, detail: practice name, short description and location)	good good short	How this good practice/experience has contributed to the actions developed in your Action Plan (detail any transfers, full or partial of good practice)
		partners during the first interregional event in Lahti. It will serve as an inspiration for Action 4.

5. ACTIONS DESCRIPTION

5.1 ACTION 1 – SUPPORT FOR REVISION OF THE STRATEGIC FOCUS OF THE WPM – REFOCUSING THE STRATEGIC AIM 4 TOWARDS CIRCULAR ECONOMY

CHANGE IN THE STRATEGIC FOCUS OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT

We envisage to add an additional strategic focus in WPM specifically on the involvement of citizens into circular economy activities and to include objectives, measures and indicators in the WPM. We aim to revise the strategic focus of the WPM the Strategic aim 4, which is at the moment focused on separate waste collection, redesigning it to refocus at involvement of citizens into circular economy activities, which will also encompass the separate waste collection. We aim at using the gained knowledge to allocate funds through the policy instrument in activities for a shift in mindsets and cultural attitudes from citizens to get involved in and receptive to waste prevention and waste separation. Our main focus is to attract institutions, businesses and households to deal with waste and gives priority to measures in the following sequence:

- a) Prevention of waste generation
- b) Preparation for re-use
- c) Recycling

A specific suggestion, redesigning Strategic aim 4, refocusing the involvement of citizens into circular economy activities, which will also encompass the separate waste collection, has been discussed during CECI project RMSG meetings. It will be submitted officially to the

Municipal Council of Varna to be taken under consideration when amending the WMP or the new policy instrument.

The Action concerns a newly formulated Strategic aim 4. As explained above, Circular economy is not amongst the objectives of the Waste strategy. Redesigning the Strategic aim will result in redesigning the measures to be planned for financing in the Annual Municipal Council budget as the main financing instrument of Varna City. This is the reason to focus at the re-design of the strategic aims of the Strategy.

5.2 ACTION 2 - IMPROVEMENT OF GOVERNANCE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE WPM, ADDING MUNICIPAL LEVEL INITIATIVE 'VARNA CITIZENS FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY'

CHANGE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT

We will also attain an improvement of governance in the management of the policy instrument, adding municipal level initiative 'Varna citizens for the circular economy', based on the exchange of experience with partners, engaging citizens in a participatory process to implement circular economy and developing new circular business opportunities.

This initiative is aiming at involving actively citizens through a dedicated website – www.circularvarna.com, that is under implementation already. The aim is to set up a policy engagement platform to support the planning and implementation of the Waste Strategy with a focus on citizens' involvement in circular economy implementation at local level. The participation of citizens, as the largest "player" in the waste production, is especially important at a time when new responses to major economic, social and environmental challenges necessarily imply changes in behaviour patterns at both social and individual levels. On the other side, the pressing conditions for the urgent need to reduce dramatically the waste from households therefore requires a step beyond the traditional methods to integrate citizens in the planning processes of waste management. So a Participation Platform as a joint initial working formula of the local government and the most proactive agents of circular economy (NGOs and proactive institutions) will act to boost citizen participation in circular economy implementation.

This will be a very flexible structure to gather existing open participation forums to evolve in a network. Its main objective is to achieve the greatest possible involvement of citizens and the main beneficiaries of the Waste strategy, with special attention to activities that will boost the involvement of citizens in circular economy.

The platform is only conceived and not started.

Based on the learnings from CECI project, the platform will invite other actors, not only citizens. Companies, professional groups, universities, social and civic organizations, members of the educational community, technological and research centres, independent ecological design or innovation consulting professionals, science and technology parks, incubators, accelerators, investors... and, of course, the local and regional administration, will be called upon to be part of this participatory social innovation challenge that aims to excite Varna society in shifting towards a future of higher quality of life, more “green” and sustainable, thanks to the driving force of the will for boosting the circular economy approaches .

The main aim of this participatory platform is to be accepted by Varna Municipal Council as an instrument for constant interaction with citizens and stakeholders on the issues related to circular economy. The platform will be sought to be recognised by Varna municipal council considering the different activities carried out by people, the environments in which they live and the resources they use, seeking their sustainability and adaptation to the new challenges related to the health of the population and demographic change. The platform will serve as a source of information and advice for anyone wanting to learn more about how we can make cities greener and more sustainable. This tool will support city governance and the approach taken to sustainable urban planning engaging citizens in designing, sharing and supporting circular economy initiatives.

We aim at ensuring that the platform will be included in Varna Municipal Council work as a participatory platform for improved and more open governance of the Waste strategy of Varna.

5.3 ACTION 3 - ENSURING STABLE CONDITIONS FOR SPECIFIC NEW PROJECTS, RELATED TO CITIZENS INVOLVEMENT INTO CIRCULAR ECONOMY IMPLEMENTATION TO BE FUNDED THROUGH IMPROVED WMP

IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW PROJECTS

We aim at improving the policy instrument through suggestion a fully elaborated “Call for proposal” funding measure for funding projects linking citizen involvement to circular economy under the municipal budget related to Varna City Waste Management Plan. The Action plan aims at ensuring stable conditions for specific new projects to be funded through improved WMP. The Action 3 is dependent on the successful implementation of the previous two actions – the first will change and amend the Strategic aim 4, thus opening the road to finance circular economy projects, and the second will raise the participation and the interest of stakeholders for designing and implementing circular economy projects and initiatives.

Business agency association as partner in CECI project has been meanwhile reviewing good practices from CECI project partners' countries that could best answer the regional needs. After a detailed study of good practices collected within CECI project), The selection of this action is the result of the process started by BAA within the CECI project in coordination with regional multi-stakeholders group.

A fully elaborated measure for funding citizens projects through the Municipal budget and suggestion for an initial “seed” funding of 5000 lev per project will be submitted to Varna Municipal Council. The “seed” funding is expected to come from the Municipal budget of Varna and distributed through the funding scheme elaborated and submitted to Varna Municipal Council thanks to this Action 3.

As all the Actions are interrelated the context, the knowledge applied from CECI project and timeframe and budget are aggregated.

6. TIMEFRAME AND FUNDING

Include here the timeframe for the project funding application and set-up/implementation process. Note: this chart will be key for the reporting procedure on the indicators given in the Application Form (Number of Projects and Investments relating to your PI and other Policy Instruments)

Project/Action Investment Line/Funding Source + Amount (please state each source of funding)	Submitted For Funding	Funding Decision	Project Start Date / End date	Other milestones	key
Action 3 – Ensuring stable conditions for specific new projects, related to citizens involvement into circular economy implementation to be funded through improved WMP	March 2023	July 2023	September 2023		

7. WORKPLAN

The Action plan has a total lifespan of 12 months, divided into 3 work packages. These are summarised below:

WP	Activity	Duration	Indicative Time-plan
1	Project Management	12 months	August 2022 - July 2023
2	Implementation Phase 1 – elaboration of the three planned suggestions according to the policy instrument (Change in Strategic aim 4,	5 months (from 1st to 6th month)	August 2022 - December 2022
3	Implementation Phase 2 – Submission of suggestions and support for their implementation	7 months (from 7 to 12 month)	January 2023 - July 2023
4	Dissemination Activities	12 months	August 2022 - July 2023

7.1 BUDGET BREAKDOWN FOR THE ACTIONS

Category of funding	Expenditure Amount
Total amount of the grants (suggested) ensured by Varna annual budget	100 000 Lev

7.2 VIABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The actions viability and sustainability should be tested through the application of approaches that could measure how the citizens involved and supported by the funding scheme are intensifying their involvement into the circular economy implementation. We plan to measure the effectiveness of the actions implemented by the following: 1. The number of citizens joining the existing FB group dedicated to the circular economy with an aim to reach at least 3000 people, 2. A survey held with at least 100 citizens on the possible change of their understanding regarding circular economy

involvement. 3. Measurement of involvement of citizens in circular economy-dedicated projects initiation – at least 5 projects initiated.

7.3 IMPACT EXPECTED

The implementation of the CECI action plan will significantly increase the preparedness of the citizens of Varna to apply approaches and practices to implement actively and effectively the circular economy principles in their daily life.

7.3.1 Impact on the policy instrument addressed

The improvement of the policy instrument will be realized at both policy levels – management of the programme and new projects supported.

We ensure the participation of many citizens and key stakeholders from the regional ecological ecosystem into the improvement of the policy instrument. The goal is to refocus the engagement of citizens of Varna towards possible implementation of

7.3.2 Specific impact on the region

The following table presents the specific impact expected if the funding scheme is implemented for different amounts:

Amount of funding allocated by Varna Council	Single support equal to:	Citizens; project targeted	SMEs/NGOs involved providers as	Solutions Implemented
100 000 lev	5000 Leva	20	10	At least 10

7.4 MONITORING ACTIVITIES IN PHASE 2

As enlisted, survey will be held, FB numbers of added people counted and number of projects reported.

Approval of Action Plan: Please use the model below on headed paper of your organisation

..... agrees to implement the Action Plan for the ... as detailed above. I confirm that I have the required authorisation of to do so and that the required authorisation process of has been duly carried out.

On behalf of:

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Position in Organisation: _____

Date: _____

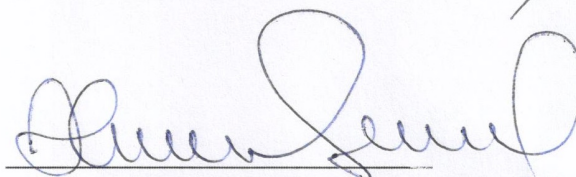
Одобрение на плана за действие:

Потвърждаваме, че се запознахме с Плана за действие, както е описан по-горе, и че приемаме да разгледаме възможността предложенията в него да бъдат реализирани в случай на положително становище на Общински съвет Варна.

От името на:

Общински съвет - Варна

Подпис:



Име:

Христо Атанасов

Позиция в организацията:

зам.-председател на ОБС-Варна

Дата:

29.07.22г.