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NEWSLETTER 1

CIRCULAR – Circular Economy Living Laboratories
supporting Social Innovation in Southeast Asia



ABOUT CIRCULAR

Southeast Asian (SEA) countries are particularly affected by the effects of climate change.

Circular economy can help revert this context by favouring eco-effectiveness and reducing environmental impact, at the same time producing a positive ecological, economic and social impact. Indeed, one important principle of circular economy is to decouple economic growth from the consumption of raw materials. In addition to benefits such as resource savings and a reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases, circular economy can lead to a significant growth in employment and in innovation.

CIRCULAR is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme and will help boost the social innovation ecosystem in Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos by bringing together and reinforcing the links between Teaching, Research, Innovation and Society in order to collaboratively design and test innovative solutions to mitigate waste management problems, promote circular economy approaches and improve the quality of life of local communities, supported by a socially engaged student body that is committed to environmental sustainability.



OBJECTIVES

- Design a **collaborative model for social innovation** with a specific focus on circular economy
- Enhance **community-based participatory research and citizen science** and promote a new pedagogical framework for embedding **community engagement actions** as part of Higher Education Study Programmes
- Set-up **Living Labs** as open innovation ecosystems that help to adapt greener and more sustainable practices and a more efficient use of resources
- Build the **capacities of academics and researchers**
- Empower students and young people to become **socially engaged, climate-conscious and active citizens** and raise the awareness on the topic of circular economy and sustainable development



CONSORTIUM

- **usm** (Universiti Sains Malaysia, Penang, Malaysia): Project Coordinator.
- **UNIMAS** (Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, Malaysia)
- **RUPP** (Royal University of Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia)
- **SRU** (Svay Rieng University, Svay Rieng, Cambodia)
- **NUOL** (National University of Laos, Vientiane, Laos)
- **SKU** (Savannakhet University, Savannakhet, Laos)
- **UAL** (University of Almeria, Almeria, Spain)
- **IPC** (Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal)
- **INCOMA** (International Consulting and Mobility Agency, Seville, Spain)





KICK-OFF MEETING & COLLABORATIVE PEER LEARNING WORKSHOP IN COIMBRA, PORTUGAL

On the 9th and 10th of May, the CIRCULAR project consortium met for the first time in person. Partners travelled to Coimbra, Portugal where the Kick-Off meeting was hosted by IPC.

During the meeting, project related issues such as Project Management, Quality Assurance, Dissemination Strategy and financial issues were discussed.

Moreover, guest speakers were invited who held interesting speeches about Circular Economy, Social Innovation and Collaborative Networks.



Combined with the Kick-Off Meeting, the Collaborative Peer Learning Workshop took place from the 10th to 12th of May.

In the workshop, the European partners presented best practices and case studies on topics such as waste management, social innovation and circular economy they previously did a Desk Research on.

Additionally, the workshop was a platform for mutual exchange and learning between European and Southeast Asian partners. The consortium discussed the third mission of universities as well as the specific challenges SEA universities face.

The partnership also had some working sessions dedicated to the next project activities (consultations to stakeholders in SEA and co-design of the CIRCULAR Model).

Apart from the working sessions, partners also had time to discover the beautiful city of Coimbra and try local food.





PROJECT ACTIVITIES

DESK & FIELD RESEARCH (T2.2 & T2.5)

Within the Work Package 2 the CIRCULAR Model will be co-designed. This model will be an easily transferable and adaptable framework tailored to the specific needs of local communities in Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos for reinforcing the universities' third mission, to boost successful cooperation for social innovation as well as community-based participatory research.

To develop this CIRCULAR Model, a Desk and Field Research were conducted in the first months of the project.



Results, inputs and conclusions from the desk and field research were gathered in the report on Higher Education Practices for boosting Social Innovation in Circular Economy (D2.2).

Based on that, the consortium will now start working on the co-design of the CIRCULAR Model until the end of the first project year.



European partners compiled existing practices and case studies related to the topics of circular economy, community engagement, service-learning, education for sustainable development, environmental sustainability and waste management. To get an insight into best practices in different EU countries, cases from Portugal, Spain, Germany, Italy and Greece were selected, reviewed and analysed regarding aspects such as scope, actions implemented, results, approach and lessons learned for CIRCULAR.

Partners in Malaysia, Cambodia and Laos organised interviews and consultations with stakeholders. Those stakeholders included academics, researchers, local authorities, NGO's, associated partners of the project and the local community. After the mapping of the stakeholders, the interviews were conducted.



BIZMALAYSIA FEATURE: 26 JUNE 2023

Youtube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQhEM2vyL-o>

On June 26, 2023, our own CIRCULAR Coordinator, Asyirah Abdul Rahim was featured on BizMalaysia, a program on Malaysia National TV Channel. The segment focused on Circular Economy and the critical role of community-based projects in its adoption in Malaysia. Asyirah highlighted the significance of Circular Economy, a sustainable model aiming to reduce waste and enhance resource responsibility, fostering a greener future. The sharing emphasised the pivotal role of community-based projects in driving Circular Economy initiatives, empowering local communities in sustainable practices. Our BizMalaysia feature marks a milestone in promoting sustainability and community engagement. Join us as we continue to drive positive change through upcoming events and initiatives.

Get Involved

To participate or partner in Circular Economy community projects, please contact any of our partners. Your support is vital in our journey towards a more eco-friendly and economically sustainable world.



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