

RESOURCE

Regional project development assistance
for the uptake of an Aragonese circular economy

D1.3 - Results of co-creation workshops

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESOURCE is a 36-months project funded by the European Union Horizon Europe programme aiming at developing a **methodology with personalised services to accelerate private financing of circular economy projects in raising 20 million euros**. This methodology will be tested in the Aragon region, as a pilot case, and will be replicated in European countries

Co-creation workshops have been organised by the RESOURCE team in order to design RESOURCE methodology for supporting Circular Economy pilot project's investment readiness and accelerate their fundraising

This deliverable describes the three co-creation workshops organised and analyse their outcomes

The RESOURCE Accelerator Programme focuses on providing a comprehensive support to circular economy projects through environmental assessments, technical assessments, business and legal and regulatory support. The environmental assessments help companies improve their environmental performance and align with sustainability standards, while the technical assessments ensure the projects are market-ready by evaluating their feasibility and innovation potential. Legal support aids projects in navigating complex regulations, enhancing compliance and reducing risks. This combination of services enhances the attractiveness of circular economy projects to investors and supports their successful implementation.

Strategic recommendations highlighted the importance of a strong team, including sales and HR expertise, and the establishment of advisory and scientific boards for strengthened credibility. Customized frameworks addressing Circular Readiness Level (CRL) and sector-specific aspects are crucial for tailored project support. Emphasis is placed on thorough technical and business assessments, investor readiness, and business mentorship to avoid common pitfalls. Establishing partnerships with financial institutions and providing clear policy briefs on tax exemptions and legal recommendations further enhance project feasibility and investor confidence. This holistic approach aims to prepare circular economy projects comprehensively for investment and scaling, ensuring their long-term success and sustainability.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| Abbreviations | Meaning |
|------------------|---|
| BIC /BICs | Business and Innovation Centre(s) |
| CCRI | Circular Cities and Regions Initiative |
| CCW | Co-Creation Workshops |
| CE | Circular economy |
| CRL | Circular Readiness Level |
| EBN | European Business and innovation centre Network |
| EC | European Commission |
| EDIH | European Digital Innovation Hubs Network |
| EE | Effective End-of-life Economy |
| EM | Efficient Waste Management System |
| EU | European Union |
| KPIs | Key Performance Indicators |
| LCA | Life Cycle Assessment |
| PBL | Proactive Public Behavior |
| PDA | Project Development Assistance |
| PI | Prepared Industrial Network |
| SL | Supportive Legal Framework |
| TRL | Technology Readiness Level |
| VC | Venture Capital or Venture Capitalist |
| WP | Work Package |

1 Introduction

1.1 Context and background

Circularity is an essential aspect of the industry transformation towards resource-efficiency, climate neutrality and long-term competitiveness.

The RESOURCE project is currently studying the private funding opportunities needed in circular projects and facilitating their development. RESOURCE's overarching objective is to develop new Project Development Assistance (PDA) services to fund regional circular economy investment projects. More precisely RESOURCE is

- building an integrated expertise pool to support technically, economically, and legally the regional circular economy pilots SMEs,
- developing innovative financing schemes and business models,
- launching concrete investments.

The methodology developed for the RESOURCE project ensures the sustainability of those circular economy projects by potentially completing their private funding with other sources of financing (European, national, and regional public funds)

The RESOURCE methodology consists of seven steps

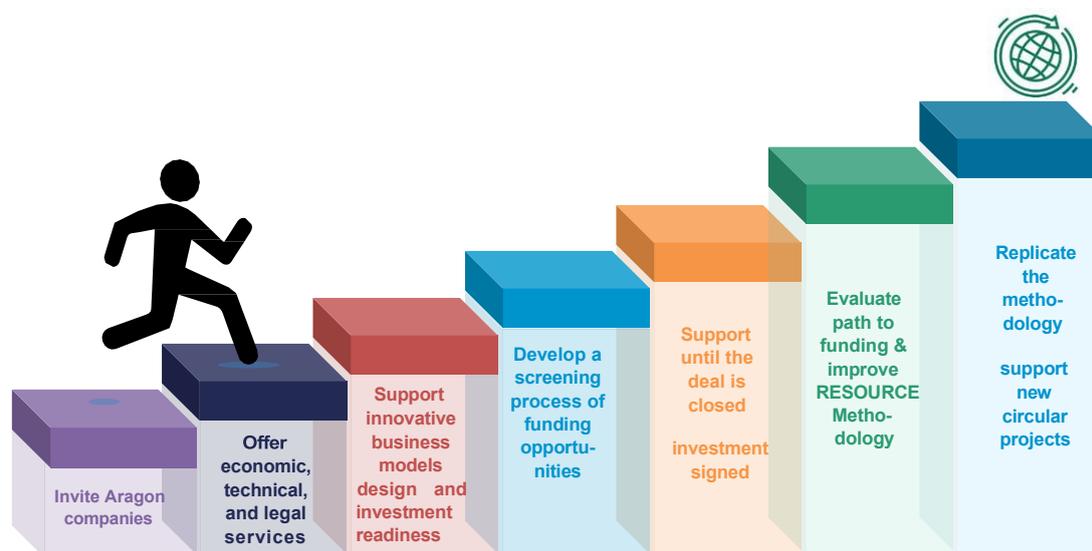


Figure 1 - The RESOURCE methodology in 7 steps

Circular economy is a priority for the Region of Aragon. The Region has launched a manifestation of interest and identified a portfolio of circular projects in need of funding. Nine of these projects will serve as pilots in the RESOURCE project.

The strong interest coming from Aragon companies to shift towards circular practices will guarantee a sustainable pipeline of projects to test the RESOURCE methodology. The final and overall objective of the RESOURCE project through the creation of a portfolio of project development assistance services, is to accelerate the development of the circular economy in Aragon and to reach €20M direct private investment in circular projects over a period of 36 months, until end of June 2025.

RESOURCE will in particular **reach out to and gather a circular economy community to develop an innovative regional** process and ecosystem to remove the technical, economic, legal, regulatory, and financial barriers the circular economy projects face

The innovative RESOURCE solution will be co-created with **public institutions, intermediary organisations, finance stakeholders and beneficiaries**. A specific **outreach and communication campaign** will be conducted from the beginning of the RESOURCE project and throughout its entire duration **to engage the largest possible number of regional stakeholders** in the community. A set of **market intelligence and awareness-raising materials** (factsheets, publications, informational videos, etc.) and **knowledge and capacity-building activities** (including online training webinars, exchange of good practices and peer experiences, etc.) will be specifically developed. A similar campaign will be conducted to reach out to and engage with other circular economy ecosystems in the EU interested in replication.

1.2 Purpose of this report

This document is developed as part of the RESOURCE project funded by the European Union under the Horizon Europe research and innovation(R&I) programme under grant agreement N° 101060142. It represents Deliverable D1.3 - Results of co-creation workshops of Work Package 1 (WP) – Stakeholder engagement.

The objective of this report is to highlight the key lessons learned from the three co-creation workshops that were held to design the RESOURCE methodology.

2 The Co-Creation Workshops (CCW)

Three CCWs have been organised throughout the first two years of the RESOURCE project's timeframe:

- The first CCW was held in Zaragoza in March 2023, organised by GoA
- The second one was merged with the co-creation workshop on exploitation, held in December Nice, organised by GAC
- The third one was held in June 2024 in Zaragoza, co-organised by EBN and GAC

2.1 First CCW "The Circular Economy in Aragón - Aragón Circular" – 28 March 2023 – Zaragoza

The first workshop, organised by the Government of Aragón, was held on 28th March, 2023 with the participation of 40 people and 20 organisations and belonging to the 4 stakeholders' groups (public institutions, facilitators, investors and final beneficiaries).

The primary objective of this event was to bridge the gap between companies seeking financing and potential investors. The workshop welcomed the Chair of Circular Engineering at UNIZAR, Ángela Laguna. Cátedra SOCOTEC Ingeniería Circular, who delivered a keynote speech on "The Circular Economy in Aragón – Aragón Circular." The participants included Aragonese companies, investors, and organizations involved in the European Resource project, representing various sectors and expertise.



Figure 2 - Organisers of the event: CEEI Aragon and the Aragon Government representatives

It was the occasion to present the main indicators to be considered for the selection of projects in order to access investment sources. Participants then agreed on prioritising the most appropriate indicators and discussed in working groups the most relevant means to access public and private funding for circular economy projects.

Details about participants, agenda and minutes can be found in Annex 5.1 - **CCW1, March 2023, Zaragoza**, agenda & attendees.



Figure 3 - Presenting RESOURCE project during the CCW1

Based on the conclusions from the investors' working group and addressing the identified bottlenecks, fundamental criteria, motivations, and risks, the following methodology was developed

1. Addressing main bottlenecks

A. Simplify and translate information

- **Action:** develop clear, jargon-free guidelines and templates for project proposals specifically tailored for SMEs.
- **Implementation:** host workshops and webinars to educate SMEs on how to effectively prepare and present their projects.

b. Streamline access to funds

- **Action:** create a centralized digital platform where startups can apply for funding, track their applications, and receive updates.
- **Implementation:** partner with financial institutions to integrate their funding opportunities into the platform.

c. Raise awareness and redefine criteria

- **Action:** conduct awareness campaigns about the benefits and criteria of circular economy projects.
- **Implementation:** use social media, industry conferences, and partnerships with trade associations to reach a wider audience.

d. Provide advice and support

- **Action:** establish structured mentorship programs connecting startups/SMEs with experienced advisors in circular economy and finance.
- **Implementation:** collaborate with industry experts, retired professionals, and successful entrepreneurs to volunteer as mentors.

2. Fundamental criteria for accessing financing

a. Commitment from management

- **Action:** ensure that startup management teams demonstrate strong commitment and passion for their projects.
- **Implementation:** provide training on leadership, managerial and project management skills.

b. Alignment with strategic priorities

- **Action:** help startups align their projects with broader economic, environmental, and social goals.
- **Implementation:** offer strategic consulting services to refine project objectives and align them with market needs.

c. Adequate resources and support

- **Action:** facilitate access to resources such as incubators, accelerators, facilities and industry networks.
- **Implementation:** Partner with local chambers of commerce, industry associations, and universities to provide these resources.

d. Clear and profitable project idea

- **Action:** assist startups in developing clear, well-thought-out business plans that highlight potential profitability.
- **Implementation:** provide templates and examples of successful business plans, along with personalized coaching and feedback sessions.

e. Appropriate timing and methodology

- **Action:** help startups identify the best times to seek funding and the methodologies to use.
- **Implementation:** create a timeline and checklist for startups to follow in their fundraising efforts.

f. Collaboration with experienced partners

- **Action:** encourage partnerships and collaborations with experienced industry players.

- **Implementation:** set up networking events and matchmaking services to connect startups with potential partners.

3. Motivations for investing in circular economy projects

a. Genuine Interest in circular ideas

- **Action:** highlight the long-term benefits, impact and market potential of circular economy projects to investors.
- **Implementation:** develop case studies and success stories to showcase the viability of these projects.

b. Responding to customer demands

- **Action:** emphasize the growing consumer interest in sustainable and eco-friendly products.
- **Implementation:** conduct market research and present data on consumer trends to potential investors.

c. Balancing economic and social goals

- **Action:** demonstrate how circular economy projects can achieve both financial returns and social impact.
- **Implementation:** use impact assessment tools to measure and report on the social and environmental benefits of projects.

d. Potential for transversal benefits

- **Action:** show how circular economy projects can create synergies across different sectors.
- **Implementation:** develop cross-sectoral collaboration frameworks and highlight examples of successful integrations.

4. Criteria for investing in a project

a. Strong management and governance

- **Action:** ensure that startups have competent and experienced management teams.
- **Implementation:** provide leadership training and governance workshops for startup founders.

b. Clear strategic alignment

- **Action:** help startups align their projects with strategic market needs.
- **Implementation:** offer market analysis and strategic planning services.

c. Well-developed business plans

- **Action:** assist startups in creating comprehensive and compelling business plans.
- **Implementation:** provide business plan templates and one-on-one coaching sessions.

e. Profitability and cost-benefit analysis

- **Action:** ensure that projects have clear paths to profitability.
- **Implementation:** provide financial modelling tools and consulting services.

f. Timing and methodology

- **Action:** guide startups on the best practices for project implementation.
- **Implementation:** offer project management training and resources.

g. Experienced partners

- **Action:** encourage collaboration with experienced industry players.
- **Implementation:** set up networking platforms and partnership programs.

5. Risks and obstacles for investing in circular economy

a. Bureaucratic complexity

- **Action:** advocate for streamlined regulatory processes and reduced bureaucratic hurdles.
- **Implementation:** work with policymakers to simplify regulations and provide clear guidelines.

b. Lack of reinvestment culture

- **Action:** promote the benefits of reinvestment (understood as the practice or attitude of reinvesting profits within the company) and emphasizing how it can lead to long-term, sustainable growth.
- **Implementation:** develop educational campaigns and resources on the benefits of reinvestment in the long run.

c. Internal coordination challenges

- **Action:** help larger companies improve internal coordination.
- **Implementation:** provide consulting services on organizational structure and process optimization.

d. Limited resources for SMEs

- **Action:** ensure SMEs have access to necessary resources and support.
- **Implementation:** develop grants and funding programs specifically for SMEs.

e. Clear definitions and roles

- **Action:** clarify the roles and responsibilities of facilitating system agents.
- **Implementation:** create detailed guidelines and frameworks for collaborations, facilitators, supports.

6. How the RESOURCE project can help

a. Utilize digital tools

- **Action:** develop and implement digital tools for tailored information and support.
- **Implementation:** create an online platform with resources, templates, and a virtual assistant for personalized guidance.

b. Encourage Experience Sharing

- **Action:** facilitate the sharing of initiatives and experiences among companies.
- **Implementation:** organize forums, webinars, and case study publications.

c. Create a “Who’s Who” agenda

- **Action:** develop a directory of key contacts and experts.
- **Implementation:** establish a single-window model for streamlined assistance and inquiries.

7. Participation in RESOURCE activities

a. Expert committee and workshops

- **Action:** invite interested stakeholders to join the Expert Committee and participate in co-creation workshops.
- **Implementation:** reach out to potential members through direct invitations and public calls for participation.

b. Engagement and collaboration

- **Action:** foster a collaborative environment for ongoing engagement and idea exchange.
- **Implementation:** set up regular meetings, brainstorming sessions, and feedback loops.

2.2 Second CCW - 23 November 2023 - online

The second CCW on RESOURCE solution was merged with the first CCW on Exploitation. It was held online in November 2023 and titled “Supporting Circular Economy Projects” Details on agenda, participants and full minutes are available in Annex 5.2 - **CCW2 online, November 2023**, minutes.

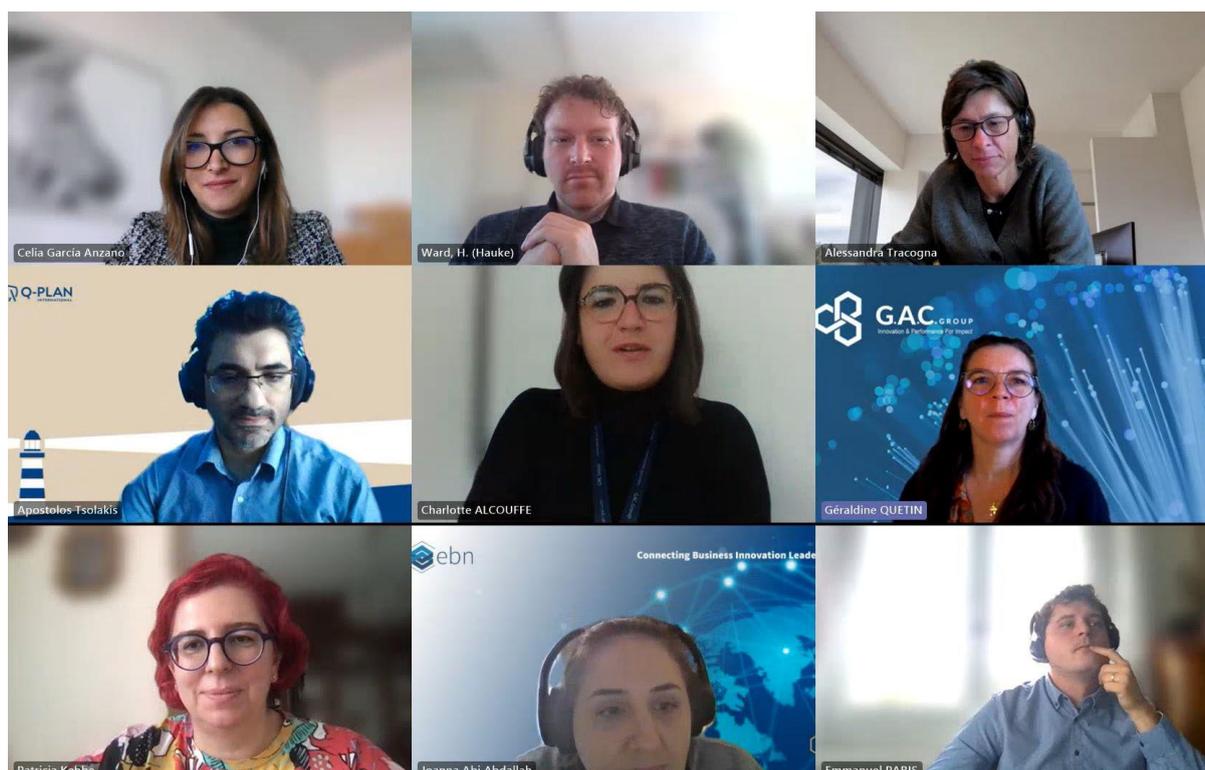


Figure 4 - RESOURCE Solution and Exploitation's CCW on "Supporting Circular Economy Projects", November 2023

Nine groups of recommendations and strategies emerged from this workshop to support and accelerate the fundraising efforts of circular economy (CE) projects

1. Target Specific and General Investors

Identify and connect with investors who are specifically interested in circular economy projects, as well as those in closely related sectors such as agri-food, biotech, energy, and waste management. Additionally, include generalist investors who might be interested in co-investing in these projects.

2. Leverage Impact Investment

Focus on attracting impact investors, including both angel investors and venture capitals. These investors are often more interested in projects that may take longer to become profitable but have quicker and more significant social and environmental impacts.

3. Develop Strong Local Networks

Establish and leverage local networks to gain access to essential resources, both technical and operational. This includes identifying potential partners within the local ecosystem who can provide strategic support, such as waste management companies or other industry players.

4. Refine and Communicate Business Plans

Ensure that CE projects prioritize and refine their business plans. A well-developed business plan is crucial for attracting investment and convincing stakeholders of the project's viability. This also includes developing a clear value proposition and communication strategy.

5. Customized Support and Investor Matching

Provide tailored support to CE projects based on their specific needs and stages of development. This includes helping projects prepare investment decks, conducting due diligence, and matching them with appropriate investors. Customization ensures that the support is relevant and effective, increasing the likelihood of successful fundraising.

6. Engage Corporate VCs and Industrial Partners

Target corporate venture capitalists and industrial partners who have a strategic interest in the technologies and innovations developed by CE projects. These partners can provide not only funding but also valuable industry insights and strategic partnerships.

7. Improve Investment Readiness and Pitch Quality

Focus on improving the investment readiness of CE projects by ensuring they have a clear and compelling pitch deck tailored to the interests of potential investors. This includes highlighting the project's environmental and social impacts, market potential, and scalability.

8. Streamline Project Selection and Support Process

Structure the selection process for projects more efficiently to ensure that only those close to investment readiness are chosen. Design a global entrepreneur's journey that is agile and responsive to the evolving needs of the projects, providing a single point of contact for continuous support.

9. Enhance Communication and Value Proposition

Strengthen the overall communication strategy to better articulate the value proposition of the CE projects. This includes communicating the broader benefits of the circular economy to potential investors and stakeholders, making the projects more attractive and understandable.

By implementing these strategies, circular economy projects can enhance their attractiveness to investors, streamline their fundraising efforts, and increase their chances of securing the necessary funding for successful project implementation.

2.3 Third CCW - June 2024 – Zaragoza

The third CCW on RESOURCE solution was held along the Consortium Meeting early June 2024 in Zaragoza. It was a hybrid co-creation session organised during a specific agenda moment in the Consortium Meeting. Details on agenda, participants and full minutes are available in Annex CCW3 minutes - 5-6 June 2024. Zaragoza.



Figure 5 – Internal Workshop on RESOURCE methodology, June 2024 – Zaragoza

Out of the discussions, the crucial strategies and recommendations to support and accelerate the fundraising efforts of circular economy projects are listed below

1. Focus on the Team

- Ensure the team includes a sales expertise
- Advisory boards and scientific boards =add legitimacy and credibility to the project, strengthening fundraising efforts.

2. Customized Framework and Methodology

- Clarify the criteria and expectations to ensure alignment with project goals.
- Develop a framework addressing Circular Readiness Level (CRL).
- Include a comprehensive methodology focusing on sector-specific aspects such as waste, sustainability, and innovation in Aragon.

3. Technical and Business Assessment

- Conduct thorough technical assessments to ensure technologies are market-ready.
- Emphasize non-technological aspects, such as team composition and business strategy, to enhance project readiness for investment.
- Implement a 360-degree assessment approach, offering tailored coaching and expert intervention on both business and technical matters.

4. Investor Mapping and Pilot Readiness

- Ensure pilots are ready to meet investors by having a clear understanding of their business model and market strategy.
- Avoid promoting projects that are not yet mature or have undefined sales strategies, or ready to collapse, as investors do not invest in non-promising and dreams' projects.

- Emphasize the importance of having a strong CEO and/or salesperson to drive business development. Encourage projects to secure initial sales or clients and prove their market potential before seeking significant funding.
- 5. **Business Mentorship**
 - Assign business mentors to support startups and avoid common pitfalls.
 - Facilitate meetings with experienced entrepreneurs who can provide valuable insights into scaling and growing their businesses.
- 6. **Agreements and Partnerships**
 - Establish agreements with banks for better financing conditions for CE companies.
 - Form partnerships with companies and regional family offices, that are interested in CE projects, to explore new investment opportunities.
- 7. **Policy and Legal impact**
 - Provide clear explanations and policy briefs on tax exemptions and legal recommendations.
 - Develop factsheets on good practices and methodology to assist other regions and projects.

3 Other sources used to design the methodology

3.1 The Circular Bioeconomy Readiness Level

The deliverable [D2.2- RESOURCE Circular bioeconomy readiness level](#) provides several recommendations to support and accelerate fundraising efforts for circular economy projects, emphasizing a strategic and multi-faceted approach. Here are some key recommendations

1. Targeted tax breaks

- **Description:** Reduce taxes for businesses that design durable, repairable products and implement take-back programs. Conversely, consider tax increases on virgin materials and products with short lifespans.
- **Rationale:** This incentivizes businesses to adopt circular practices by making it financially advantageous to produce sustainable goods

2. Subsidies and grants

- **Description:** Offer financial assistance for businesses to adopt circular practices, including funding for infrastructure development in repair, reuse, and recycling facilities.
- **Rationale:** Financial support can help offset initial investment risks and operational costs, encouraging businesses to transition to circular models

3. Green public procurement

- **Description:** Public institutions should prioritize purchasing products made with recycled materials, designed for longevity, and with take-back options.
- **Rationale:** By leveraging public sector purchasing power, this can create a significant market demand for circular products, driving broader industry adoption

4. Circular economy business awards

- **Description:** Recognize and celebrate businesses excelling in circular practices through awards.
- **Rationale:** This incentivizes innovation and raises public awareness of successful circular models, encouraging more businesses to follow suit

5. Development of innovative financing schemes and business models

- **Description:** Create new Project Development Assistance (PDA) services to support regional circular economy investment projects by building an integrated expertise pool to support the regional circular economy pilots SMEs technically, economically, and legally.
- **Rationale:** By providing tailored support and innovative financing schemes, this approach aims to ensure the financial sustainability of circular economy projects

6. Screening process of funding opportunities

- **Description:** Develop a systematic process to identify and screen funding opportunities.
- **Rationale:** This helps ensure that circular economy projects have access to the necessary financial resources and can navigate the often-complex funding landscape

7. Support until the deal is closed

- **Description:** Provide continuous support to circular economy projects until funding deals are finalized.
- **Rationale:** Ongoing support can help address challenges that arise during the **funding** process, increasing the likelihood of successful financing

8. Evaluation and improvement of methodologies

- **Description:** Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of funding methodologies and improve them based on feedback and changing circumstances.
- **Rationale:** This ensures that the approaches used remain effective and relevant, adapting to new challenges and opportunities in the circular economy landscape

9. Replication of methodologies

- **Description:** Ensure that successful methodologies are replicated in new circular projects.
- **Rationale:** By replicating proven strategies, the initiative can maximize its impact and support a larger number of projects

These recommendations highlight the importance of a comprehensive strategy that includes financial incentives, public procurement practices, continuous support, and the development and replication of successful methodologies. Implementing these measures can significantly support and accelerate fundraising efforts for circular economy projects.

3.2 Benchmarking and feedback sessions at the 2024 EBN Congress

RESOURCE participated in the EBN Congress held in Nantes (France), in June 2024 that is the largest gathering of European incubators, accelerators, innovation centres, and innovation supporters of all kinds.

A specific session was dedicated to “Circular Economy, a key factor for sustainability” where RESOURCE participated in the panel discussion, together with sister project KCCRI and experts from incubators or businesses integrating Circular Economy principles into their support programs and methodologies. As industries grapple with the imperative to embrace sustainability, the circular economy emerges as a transformative concept. The challenge lies in understanding how the circular economy can be put into practice successfully and at scale, and how it can lead to prosperity and growth. How do regions, support organisations and businesses successfully integrate circular practices to pave the way.



Figure 6 - RESOURCE presentation at the EBN Congress 2024

In a side session, RESOURCE project presented its draft methodology to a selected group of EBN members, some of whom were part of the Best Practice Knowledge Sharing Session. The objectives was to gather feedback and recommendations from EBN members.

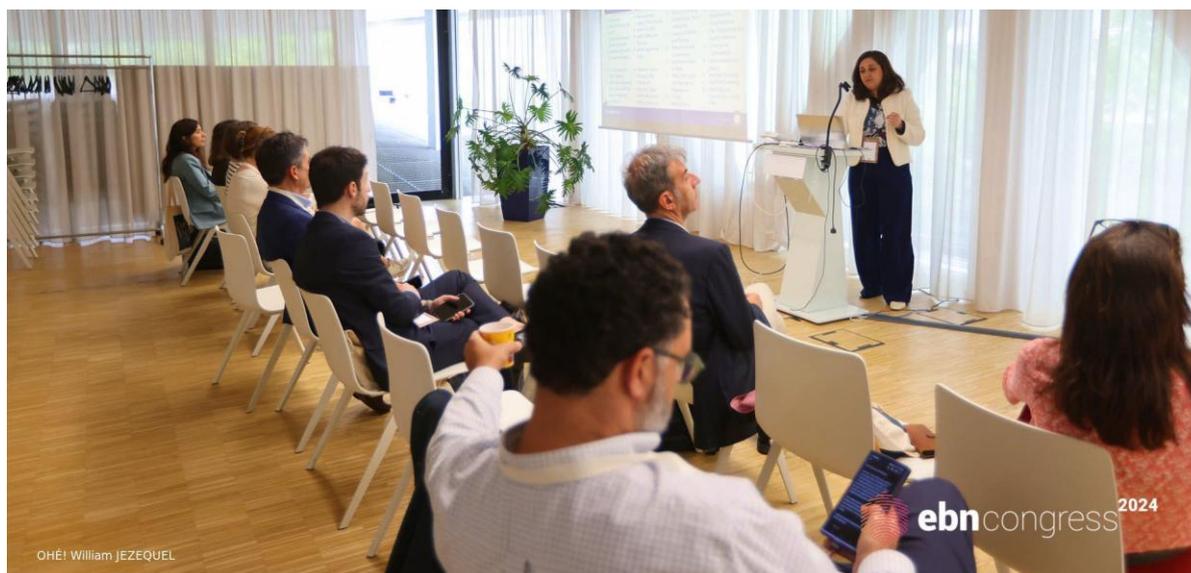


Figure 7 – RESOURCE’s side session: draft methodology presented to a selected group of EBN members

In light of the discussions and insights gathered at the EBN Congress, here are ten key recommendations for support organizations to effectively assist circular economy (CE) businesses in accelerating their fundraising success

1. **Implement the quadruple helix model:** Facilitate collaboration between academia, industry, government, and civil society. This approach fosters innovation, resource sharing, and holistic project development essential for CE initiatives.
2. **Use cities as testbeds:** Leverage cities like Lappeenranta as practical testbeds for CE solutions. Demonstrating successful circular practices in real-world environments can attract investors by providing tangible data and proven models.
3. **Showcase specific circular actions:** Highlight concrete actions such as waste separation, biogas for vehicles, and demolition waste sorting. These initiatives can demonstrate a strong commitment to CE practices, making them more attractive to investors.
4. **Establish clear KPIs and objectives:** Develop and communicate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) such as CO2 reduction levels and the number of companies involved in CE. Measurable goals can showcase the impact and progress of CE projects to potential investors.
5. **Highlight successful industry examples:** Use examples from industries like steel manufacturing (e.g., Arcelor Mittal) to demonstrate the feasibility and scalability of CE practices. Emphasize adaptable process frameworks and the importance of local collaboration.
6. **Benchmark and learn from other initiatives:** Share lessons learned from projects like PopMachina. Simplifying investment models and understanding regulatory challenges can refine strategies for attracting investment and ensuring project success.
7. **Focus on impact investment:** Encourage projects to be entrepreneur-centric and focus on creating systemic solutions. Demonstrating sustainable business models that offer recurring value can attract impact investors who prioritize long-term social and environmental benefits.
8. **Integrate public policy early:** Advocate for the early integration of public policy, including fiscal incentives and regulatory support. This makes circular practices more financially attractive and convenient for businesses, encouraging investment.

9. **Emphasize regulation and compliance:** Highlight the role of regulations (e.g., carbon footprint taxation) in driving CE adoption. A well-defined policy framework can create a more secure and predictable investment environment.
10. **Adapt strategies locally and globally:** Tailor strategies to local contexts while maintaining a global perspective. Finding suitable local partners and stakeholders is crucial for scaling CE projects and attracting investment.

Additional recommendations emerged for support organization to conduct circular projects towards fundraising success

1. **Target a diversified investors base**
 - Engage with investors specifically interested in CE projects as well as those in related sectors (agri-food, biotech, energy, waste management). Include generalist investors who may co-invest in these projects.
2. **Leverage impact investment opportunities**
 - Focus on attracting impact investors who value social and environmental impacts alongside financial returns.
3. **Develop Strong Local Networks**
 - Establish local networks to access technical and operational resources. Identify potential partners within the local ecosystem for strategic support.
4. **Refine and communicate business plans**
 - Develop clear, compelling business plans that highlight the project's value proposition and market potential.
5. **Provide Customized support and investor matching**
 - Offer tailored support based on project needs and development stages. Match projects with appropriate investors and assist with investment decks and due diligence.
6. **Engage Corporate venture capitalists and industrial partners**
 - Target corporate venture capitalists and industrial partners interested in CE technologies for funding and strategic partnerships.
7. **Improve Investment readiness and pitch quality**
 - Enhance the investment readiness of projects with clear, compelling pitches that emphasize environmental and social impacts, scalability, and market potential.
8. **Streamline project selection and support processes**
 - Efficiently structure the project selection process to focus on investment-ready projects. Provide continuous support with a single point of contact.
9. **Enhance communication and value proposition**
 - Strengthen communication strategies to articulate the value proposition of CE projects clearly. Make the benefits of the circular economy evident to investors and stakeholders.

By adopting these recommendations, support organizations can effectively accelerate the fundraising success of circular economy businesses, fostering sustainable growth and innovation.

4 Conclusion

4.1 Recommendations based on the results of the co-creation workshops

The CCWs led to 10 main recommendations emphasizing a comprehensive support system that combines technical, business, and legal assistance:

1. Environmental assessment

- **Service Description and Challenges:** The environmental assessment service aims to evaluate the environmental impact of projects within the circular economy framework. The main challenge is ensuring that these assessments are comprehensive and align with sustainability goals.
- **Unique Value Proposition:** The unique value proposition lies in providing tailored environmental assessments that help companies identify areas for improvement and align their projects with sustainability standards. This service supports companies in enhancing their environmental performance and attractiveness to investors.

2. Technical assessment and support methodology

- **Service Description and Challenges:** This service focuses on evaluating the technical feasibility and innovation potential of circular economy projects. Challenges include keeping up with rapid technological advancements and ensuring projects are market-ready.
- **Unique Value Proposition:** Offering detailed technical assessments and support increases the likelihood of project success. The methodology includes a comprehensive evaluation of technological readiness, which is critical for securing investment.

3. Legal and regulatory support

- **Service Description and Challenges:** The legal and regulatory support service helps projects navigate complex regulatory landscapes. Challenges include varying regulations across regions and the evolving nature of circular economy laws.
- **Unique Value Proposition:** By providing expert legal advice and support, the service ensures that projects comply with relevant regulations, reducing risks and enhancing investor confidence.

4. Focus on the team

- Ensure the inclusion of sales and HR dimensions to support entrepreneurial teams.
- Advisory and scientific boards add legitimacy and credibility, aiding in fundraising efforts.

5. Customized framework and methodology

- Develop clear criteria and expectations aligned with project goals.
- Create frameworks addressing Circular Readiness Level (CRL) and sector-specific aspects like waste sustainability and innovation.

6. Technical and business assessment

- Conduct thorough technical assessments to ensure market readiness.
- Emphasize the importance of non-technological aspects such as team composition and business strategy.
- Implement a 360-degree assessment approach for tailored coaching and expert intervention.

7. Investor mapping and pilot readiness

- Ensure pilots are prepared to meet investors with clear business models and market strategies.
- Avoid promoting immature projects or those with undefined sales strategies.
- Highlight the importance of having a strong CEO and/or salesperson to drive business development.

8. Business mentorship

- Assign mentors to help startups avoid common pitfalls and save time.
- Facilitate meetings with experienced entrepreneurs for insights on scaling and growth.

9. Agreements and partnerships

- Establish agreements with banks for better financing conditions.
- Form partnerships with companies and regional family offices interested in circular economy projects.

10. Policy and Legal impact

- Provide clear explanations and policy briefs on tax exemptions and legal recommendations.
- Develop factsheets on good practices and methodologies to assist other regions and projects.

4.2 Mapping successful circular economy projects

RESOURCE team also conducted an overview and analysis of successful circular economy initiatives across various European countries and within European projects. Using referrals, participation in congresses, interviews, and questionnaires more than 50 organizations and initiatives were mapped and analysed.

It resulted a selection of best practices that were categorized into several pillars:

- Access to Funding Components
- Capacity Building and Training
- Networking and Collaboration
- Technical Support to SMEs
- Policy, Advocacy, and Regulatory Frameworks
- Project Management

Based on those first outcomes Best Practice Knowledge Sharing Sessions were developed compiling over 30 best practices following identified pillars. Sources involved best practices within CCRI projects, EU|BICs, SMEs and startups, regions, and cities, through a wide geographical scope (including Lebanon, Cyprus, Portugal, Italy, France, etc.)

Then partners selected & ranked those Best Practices from 1 (Poor: The practice does not adequately address the needs) until 4 (Very Good: The practice is highly effective with strong impact), with specific criteria such as:

- Alignment with Circular Economy Principles and Project Pillars
- Scalability and Replicability
- Long-Term Sustainability

Results and details can be found in the [D4.1 - Mapping of Successful Circular Economy Projects across Europe](#) and [D4.2 – Best Practice Selection](#).

This multifaceted approach ensures that circular economy projects are well-prepared for investment and implementation. The focus on team composition, customized frameworks, and thorough assessments highlights the need for a holistic strategy to address the unique challenges of circular economy initiatives. Partnerships with financial institutions and legal support further enhance the feasibility and attractiveness of these projects to investors, ultimately contributing to the successful scaling and adoption of sustainable practices.

4.3 RESOURCE methodology designed and presented

To support fundraising acceleration, the methodology designed by RESOURCE project involves several **Key Components** and was presented at the EBN Congress to be challenged and refined. Those key components are:

- **Access to mixed funding opportunities**, engage with impact-oriented investors and incubation programs.
- **Capacity Building and Training**: build comprehensive program components, support services, toolkits, publications, assessments, roadmaps, templates, soft landing/access to markets, which has to be agile and that clearly showcases benefits for participating.
- **Networking and Collaboration**: build networks, mostly at regional level to improve and benefit from local value chain, increase online presence and visibility, provide flagship events, and foster cross-sector collaboration.
- **Technical Support**: Provide technical support and facilities, measurement and impact assessment, confidentiality measures. This includes the following assessment support:
 - **Circular Readiness Level (CRL) assessment**: While the technology readiness level (TRL) scale is useful for evaluating how close innovations are to market in traditional, resource-intensive economies, it falls short for circular economy projects.
 - In CE projects, local consumption and short-distance distribution are key.
 - The RESOURCE pilot projects illustrate that TRL alone doesn't guarantee a project's success in boosting regional circularity.
 - Five key areas were identified to measure the region's readiness for a circular economy.
 - Proactive Public Behavior (PBL)
 - Supportive Legal Framework (SL)
 - Effective End-of-life Economy (EE)
 - Efficient Waste Management System (EM)

- Prepared Industrial Network (PI)
 - **Environmental impact assessment**, identifying the largest contributors to impacts and further improvement potentials. To do so, the Life-Cycle Assessment (LCA) helps identifying relevant impact factors and improvement recommendations.
- **Policy, Advocacy, and Regulatory Frameworks:** Policy and regulatory engagement are essential to local development and success of circular projects, multi-level coordination, strategic planning, road mapping, and at national level, incentive alignment and adherence to national strategy.
- **Project Management** was added as key component in terms of support: flexibility and adaptability of the support provided, simplified application process, clear and transparent selection process were highlighted.

This methodology supports fundraising acceleration by providing a comprehensive framework that includes mapping successful projects, sharing best practices, rigorous selection and grading criteria, structured support methodology, readiness assessments, including technical and impact assessments, and highlight of case studies.

These steps help build a robust ecosystem conducive to fundraising and sustainable project development. They will be tested and corrected in the last period of the RESOURCE project, with the selection and support to new circular projects.

5 Annexes

5.1 CCW1 report - March 2023, Zaragoza

| Information type | Details |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Target Group | Companies interested in being part of the Resource Project and investors |
| Expected number of participants | Maximum 19 (indicative) |
| Details on attendees | Attendees are divided into 5 groups: Public Administration, Research Centres, Social Agents, Companies and Investors. |
| List of attendees | <p><u>Public Administrations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gobierno de Aragón (Government of Aragón) - FAMCP <p><u>Research Centres:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AITIIP - CEEI Aragón - ITAINNOVA - CIRCE - UNIZAR <p><u>Social Agents</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cámara de Comercio (Chamber of Commerce) - CEOE - CEPYME - UGT - CCOO <p><u>Companies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Herval - Recursos Energéticos Rurales (Rural Energy Resources) - Segundas Vidas (Second Lives) - Empresa CEEI (company convened by CEEI) <p><u>Investors</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ibercaja - Cuatrecasas - SODIAR - AVALIA |
| Final agenda and speakers | <p><u>Agenda</u></p> <p>10:00: Institutional Opening Government of Aragón - CEEI Aragón</p> <p>10:10: Presentation of RESOURCE Indicators - Circular Economy Projects</p> <p>11:00: Conference "The Circular Economy in Aragón - Aragón Circular", by the Chair of Circular Engineering of UNIZAR</p> <p>11:30: Dynamization Session - Co-creation Workshops</p> <p>- Public Administrations</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Technological & Research Centres - Social Agents - Companies - Investors <p>12:30: Closing remarks and Conclusions</p> <p><u>Speakers:</u> Eva Gavín (AITIIP) and Ángela Laguna (SOCOTEC, Clenar - Clúster de la Energía de Aragón)</p> |
| <p>Content / general outcomes (per session / global)</p> | <p><u>CONCLUSIONS OF THE INVESTORS' WORKING GROUP</u></p> <p>Representatives of AVALIA and SODIAR, as public-private institutions dedicated to providing financial support to Aragonese companies, also participate in the group as investors, as well as IBERCAJA BANCO as a financial institution especially linked to the territory of Aragon; also, two representatives of CUATRECASAS attend as representatives of private investors, accompanied by representatives of ANDBANK, IRIGEN and IBORIA CAPITAL, investors corresponding to the category of "family office"</p> <p>To the question “what are the fundamental criteria to be taken into account for accessing financing for circular economy projects”:</p> <p>ADNBANK maintains that for them it is not decisive that the project is circular economy. What they are looking for is investments that have a viable future. This does not prevent them from recognizing that the fact that the project is circular economy may be a plus. What his group values most with respect to the companies in which they are going to invest is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the government team, - the future of the company, - a good understanding of what the company does - that their project is as disruptive as possible (if it is already on the market, it is not so interesting). Ideally it should be a new niche - They limit the amount of intervention to 5% of the investment - visit the CEO of the company, the family in case of family businesses, meet them, know how they think <p>IBERCAJA does consider that the fact that the project is of circular economy is a point to add when financing projects. We seek to finance projects that are sustainable. It is also valued that they receive other aids (for example, public) and, of course, the economic data are analysed and the capacity to repay the loan is valued</p> <p>He gives as an example an ICO line of financing amounting to 84,000 million, 40% of which was earmarked for sustainable projects. In order to prove sustainability, a complex and very detailed form had to be filled in. The fact that the companies to be financed must be sustainable is a requirement that is being imposed from Europe</p> |

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| | <p>AVALIA maintains that they also give a higher valuation to projects that are sustainable, but sustainability is not considered lightly. It must be properly analysed, and, in addition, the project must be economically viable</p> <p>On the possible bottlenecks for access to financing, or which projects have more difficulties in accessing financing</p> <p>To the question “what are the fundamental criteria to take into account in order to access financing for circular economy projects”</p> <p>In general, the family office representatives stated that the lack of information dissemination is a bottleneck for access to financing. There should be more adequate channels of contact between companies and investors, especially with those that do not have the form of a financial entity open to the public. This is considered particularly burdensome for SMEs. In short, it is argued that there is a lack of a centralized channel of communication</p> <p>IBERCAJA points out that there is a virtual assistant to provide information on access to possible aid and investments. Interested companies are only required to register (free of charge) to access information channels on sources of financing</p> <p>As coordinator, I would like to point out that, while recognizing that this is a very useful tool, it is still an unknown channel and would also need to be more widely disseminated</p> <p>AVALIA points out as the main problem for access to financing the high number of guarantees required from research companies (which, therefore, do not yet have a saleable product) in order to be able to access aid. Sometimes these guarantees are disproportionate and discourage research projects</p> <p>IBERCAJA also points out that it is more difficult to grant financing to consortia of companies. It is easier if the project is individual than if it is collective (and even more so when competing companies enter the consortium). An example of this is the PERTE Agroalimentario, which required the formation of consortiums between companies engaged in the same activity and which was not awarded in a large part of its call for proposals</p> <p>It is also added that when consortia participation is required in national calls for proposals, it is more difficult for SMEs to participate in the consortia</p> <p>FAMILY OFFICE representatives maintain that they do not invest in projects that are not profitable (as previously stated in positive terms). The objective of the company must also be to distribute dividends and not to dedicate it entirely to reinvestment because the final objective is to recover the investment</p> |
|--|--|

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| | <p>Companies must allow people to enter the company. Investors participate in order to add value. Normally it is very difficult for SMEs to allow this access, but they consider it essential for someone to act as an external controller of the company and to control the company's profits. This makes it particularly difficult to invest in SMEs and family businesses</p> <p>They point out that the time horizon for aid recovery is 3 to 5 years for family offices, in general. If the investor is larger, it has to recover the benefit more immediately</p> <p>They also particularly value the composition of the company's governance team (talk about "knowing them", "eating with them", noting their passion for the project"), which they prefer to be professionalized and to respect the management of the professionals</p> <p>CUATRECASAS understands that the dedication to the company's project must be full time, and that the entrepreneur seeking financing must have a personalized involvement.</p> <p>However, some of the entities present also point out that it is also valued that the entrepreneur knows how to delegate, which is especially important in the case of startups because they are companies that lack experience and need someone to provide it</p> <p>In line with this, experience in the management of the company is valued.</p> |
| | <p>1 What are the main bottlenecks for accessing financing for circular economy projects? How can they be overcome?</p> <p>The main bottlenecks for accessing financing for circular economy projects include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The size of SMEs and the specialized language used in project proposals, which can be difficult for smaller companies to understand and engage with. • Problems and barriers in accessing funds due to complex bureaucratic processes. • The perception that some sectors are not considered circular, creating a divide. • The allocation of resources to immediate needs due to the size of the company. • Overcoming these bottlenecks can be achieved by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Simplifying and translating information into more accessible language for SMEs. ○ Streamlining the process of accessing funds to reduce bureaucratic hurdles. ○ Raising awareness and redefining the criteria for what constitutes a circular sector. ○ Providing proper advice and support to help companies focus on long-term goals rather than immediate needs. |

2 What are the fundamental criteria to consider for accessing financing for circular economy projects?

The fundamental criteria for accessing financing for circular economy projects include

- Commitment from management to drive the project.
- Alignment of the project with the company's culture and strategic priorities.
- Adequate resources and support from facilitators, associations, and chambers.
- A clear and well-developed project idea with the potential for profitability.
- Appropriate timing and methodology for project implementation.
- Collaboration with experienced partners or advisors.

3 What are your motivations (values) for investing in circular economy projects?

The motivations for investing in circular economy projects include

- A genuine interest in circular ideas, provided financial aspects are manageable.
- Responding to customer demands, particularly regarding economic considerations.
- Balancing economic goals with social and environmental responsibility.
- The potential for transversal benefits from circular diagnostics across different sectors.
- The drag effect within a value chain, where one company's success can influence others.
- The promise of economic and reputational returns from profitable circular projects.
- Enhancing awareness and understanding within the company about the benefits of circular projects.

4 What are your criteria for investing in a project?

The criteria for investing in a project include

- Commitment and support from management.
- Alignment with the company's strategic priorities and culture.
- A clear and well-developed project plan with measurable outcomes.
- Adequate resources and access to support networks.
- The potential for profitability and positive cost-benefit analysis.
- Proper timing and suitable methodology for project execution.
- Collaboration with experienced partners or advisors.

5 What are the main risks/obstacles you see for investing in the circular economy?

The main risks/obstacles for investing in the circular economy include

| | |
|------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complexity and bureaucratic nature of accessing public funds. • Lack of a reinvestment culture in some regions, such as Spain. • The need to find a balance between excessive bureaucracy and uncontrolled aids. • The challenge of internal coordination and collaboration within larger companies. • Limited resources and support for smaller companies. • The need for clear definitions and roles among facilitator system agents. <p>6 How do you think the RESOURCE project can help you?</p> <p>The RESOURCE project can help by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilizing digital tools to provide tailored information and aids based on company type. • Encouraging companies with initiatives to share their experiences and receive guidance. • Creating a “Who’s Who” agenda to identify contacts for specific queries, establishing single-window models for streamlined assistance. <p>7 Would you be interested in being part of our Expert Committee, participating in co-creation workshops for the methodology, or any other RESOURCE activities?</p> <p>CIRCE, CEOE Aragón</p> |
| Next Steps | Conference on September 28, 2023, on the activation of circular value networks in Aragon. |

5.2 CCW2 minutes - November 2023, online

Agenda

| | |
|-------|---|
| 09h30 | What is RESOURCE |
| 09h35 | Round table (30s per organization) |
| 09h45 | RESOURCE support provided and lessons learnt |
| 10h05 | Recommendations from the audience of experts: What is missing in terms of support |
| 10h20 | <p>How to federate hub support at RESOURCE level?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDIH case • RESOURCE experience and vision on next steps |
| 10h40 | Recommendations from the audience of experts: how should RESOURCE be positioned and evolve |
| 10h55 | Wrap up |

Participants

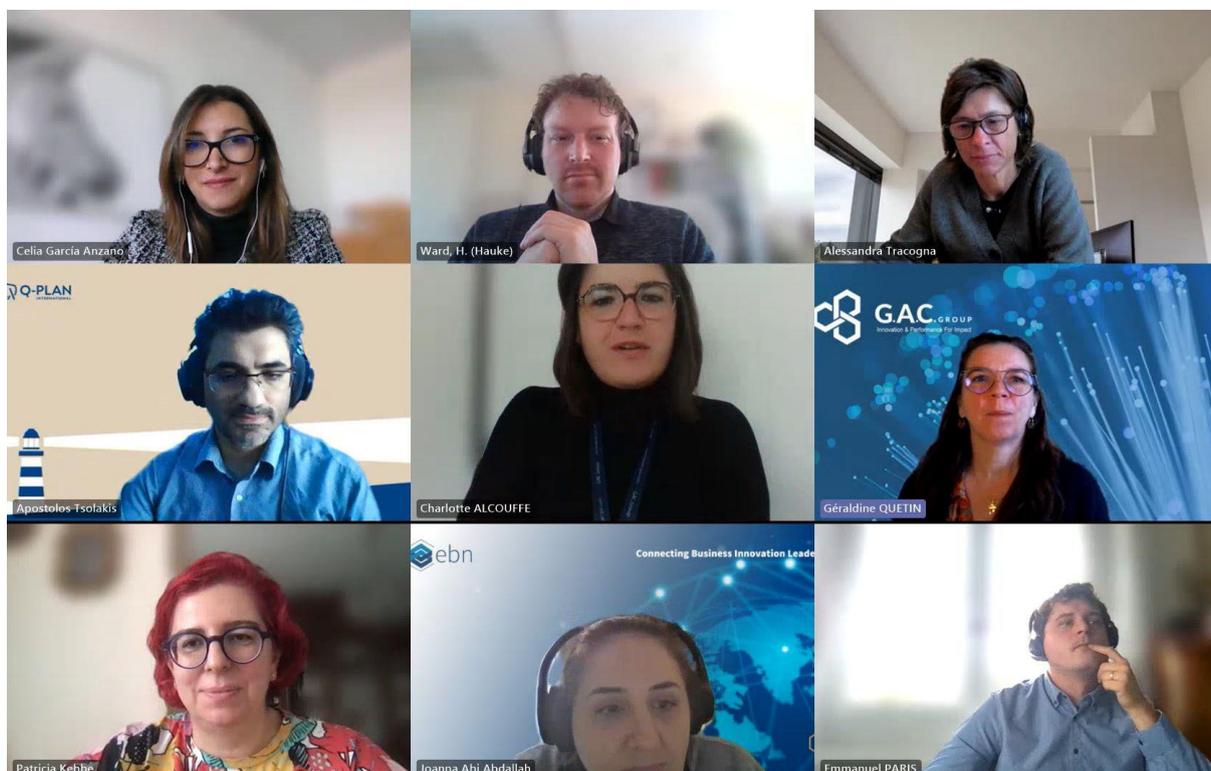
RESOURCE Team

1. Géraldine QUETIN, GAC Group
2. Lucas Rivera, Aitiip
3. Eva Ramos, ANCES
4. Ward, H. (Hauke), ULEI
5. Charlotte ALCOUFFE, GAC Group
6. Joanna Abi Abdallah, EBN
7. Maria José Marqués, EBN
8. Miguel Ángel Comín, CEEEI Aragon
9. Concepción Ramos Vela, CEEI Aragon
10. Marianne BAUMBERGER, GAC Group

11. Celia García Anzano, CEEI Aragon

Guests

1. EDIH PVF
2. CSIL
3. Berytech
4. ART-ER Startup Unit & Climate-KIC Startup Accelerator
5. Fireflies.ai
6. Q-Plan International
7. Changemakers foundation / Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha
8. Mirjana Balaba



Introduction

Today's objective is to share what we have done, to improve the methodology RESOURCE Partners have deployed and help to better structure our approach based on the participants' experience.

After a short introduction of the RESOURCE project, and a round table for everyone to introduce herself / himself, RESOURCE support methodologies were presented in detail, on 3 layers per service: what is the offer, what is specific to CE on this service's axis, what are the lessons learnt so far.

➤ **RESOURCE support provided and lessons learnt**
Environmental Assessment (ULEI)

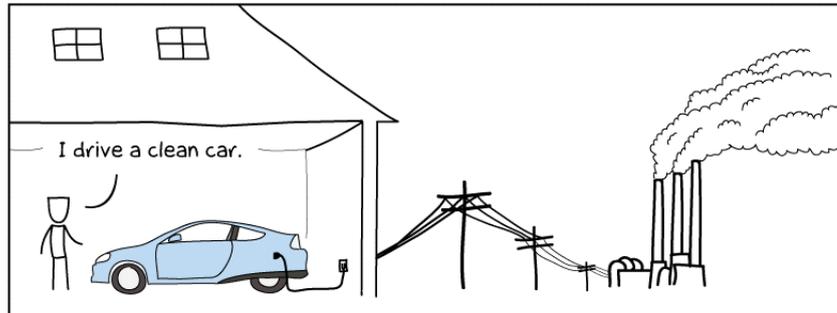
➤ What is your offer

The life cycle assessment tries to visualize what is not directly linked to processes or services and what would alternatives imply through all the supply chain.

We started with telling our knowledge to potential

partners, having a life cycle assessment workshop, trying to lay a common ground to what we need, what we can provide, what can be done thereafter with potential pilots.

We did a quick scan to understand which are promising projects that should really be assessed and detailed as such. And life cycle assessment takes human power, requires data and thereafter we tried to identify where the largest, most promising potentials that could be even easily harvested.



➤ What is specific to CE projects

When we reflect on what has been done with the project is

Confidentiality issues: a lot of projects, especially those in the startup phase, fear that the data could be spoiled and cover their competitive advantage and their knowledge.

Specific interest: often companies, start-ups and pilots are interested in specific indicators but probably not in the overall composition of indicators that might be required for full sustainability; therefore, it's important to find compromise.

Knowledge and expertise for inputs and outputs: there are also variants in the knowledge on LCA beforehand in the expertise, which data can be provided, the level of quality that we need, how can the output be handled, how much support is there? And sometimes it had been a challenge to create the awareness of the supply chains.

➤ Lessons learnt after 17 months

But overall, some general patterns were found.

1. there need to be clear data standards across regions to speed up; local governments could have a huge leverage if they set up standards and support communication.
2. The awareness of LCA for contributing to exploiting improvement potentials is sometimes underdeveloped (also funding and networking), but LCA also must ensure that there's quite some knowledge, general generalizable patterns.
3. There are partially generalizable patterns for large potentials (switching to renewable, ensure low carbon transportation, having short supply chains in addition to the individual recommendations)
4. Support by public authorities could provide huge leverage.

Technical assessment and support methodology (AITIIP)

➤ What is your offer

Aitiip is a technological centre offering support on the technological part, support among the whole value chain of the company, with

- continuous technology surveillance, looking for main or rising competitors and new technologies emerging
- Support for TRL evolution from TRL 4 to TRL 8
- Multicriteria quick assessment of Circular Economy Implementation
- Key players engagement following industrial symbiosis approach

➤ What is specific to CE projects

- Complexity of implementing accurate assessment (Systems are networks instead hierarchies) à Multiple connexions among actors and factors
- End of life technologies are misunderstood
- Clean waste approach is not well implemented

➤ Lessons learnt after 17 months

- Working with waste, biomass or renewable resources is not the only condition for implementing circular projects. We need a complete definition of a circular economy project.
- Effective data sharing by defining data ownership and access rights is not well implemented.

We are facing issues with some startups that are not willing to share confidential data, so our support is not complete because we don't know the whole scenario.

Economic feasibility (CEEI)

➤ What is your offer

CEEI is a Business Innovation centre, implementing the business plan fine tuning with the 9 projects.

Also, we are implementing the business model and the value proposition strategy with all of them, and we are starting to implement the communication strategy and getting them ready to access funding and approach investors. CEEI will soon start with the business development support and contacts with investors that are being identified.

➤ What is specific to CE projects

Some of them have been prioritising the technical plan and they are leaving the business plan in the background not as a priority. So, we are working on convincing them about having a good business plan.

Projects may be changing or refocusing when they are in initial phases, which makes the presentation more difficult. It's happening with all the pilots, not only the smallest ones (depending on the maturity).

➤ Lessons learnt after 17 months

- The timing in the projects can be different from the RESOURCE frame
- Lack of involvement and commitment of some companies, and lack of information about companies (some are afraid of sharing information, too busy / not enough staff, other priorities....)
- RESOURCE needs a better value proposition and to communicate more to the projects and in general (divulge CE, create an attractive methodology for inversion market, strengthen projects and make them attractive to investors; and identify investors). It is being necessary to convince the projects, why they have to participate in RESOURCE
- The projects can change the financial plans when they realize about unbalance between own funds and external financing (it's a high external percentage when it comes from private funding)

Ecosystem relations (EBN & CEEI)

➤ What is your offer

The objective here is to achieve a wide visibility of the RESOURCE project by establishing relationships with other organizations focusing on circular economy and financing areas. Not only the ones of the CCRI project but also other stakeholders.

Several activities have been planned: participation in conferences, workshops, the development of an ecosystem mapping with EBN members and across Europe, and collaboration with CCRI network (Circular Cities and Regions Initiative) and with other CCRI sister projects, participating in the diverse CCRI community of practice meetings.

➤ What is specific to CE projects

- The identification of investors that fully are into CE or interested in CE
- At the regional level, liaising with different regional clusters
- Identifying online platforms that could benefit the project.
- Identifying stakeholders involved in CE within EBN network

➤ Lessons learnt after 17 months

There were some challenges in gathering relevant information during the mapping, the methodology was iterated to achieve the objectives.

The CE theme is very broad and needs to be refined/ more specific. It might have been better to talk about sub sectors within circular economy.

Fundraising strategy / Attracting & matching investors (ANCES)

➤ What is your offer

So far, our main service was the identification of the investors and investment networks, the preparation of the investors' meetings. But our mainly task is related to the funding strategy, to support the pilot project's business plan when ready to be presented. We still don't have any deck at the moment.

As Celia mentioned, we will start now analysing the decks to identify relevant investors' network. We will contact group of investors aligned with this kind of projects but also with generalists that can be also interested. We will then introduce pilots to these investors.

We will advise pilot project to prepare any additional documents needed in due diligence of investors until the signing of investment deal.

➤ What is specific to CE projects

CE project need investors focusing on circular economy but also on other close sectors (such as agri-food, Biotech, Energy, waste management, etc.), together with generalists having interest in supporting this type of Project, or as co-investors

We also target Corporate VCs and industrial partners interested in the development these CE project technologies.

➤ Lessons learnt after 17 months

Investment takes time especially for CE projects

There are controversies between experts: some think that it is better to focus efforts in targeting specific investors interested in CE, when others think it is worthwhile to address generalist investors who could be interested in co-investing in these projects.

It is clear that the strategy performed in the pitch deck depends on the type of investor, specific from CE or more generalist investor.

It's also important to consider that even when the investor agreed on taking part in the investment round, the signing of the Due of diligence takes time to be proceed, even more in the case of CE projects.

➤ **Discussion with the audience**

Participants are asked to share their idea from what they've heard or share their own experience in supporting circular economy projects or maybe questions raised during the presentation.

Q-Plan International congratulates the team for the nice methodology, and suggested two things About the investors, we have found that focusing on **impact investment and impact investors**, whether we're talking about angels or venture capitals may be more interesting for CE projects because they need a lot more time to be profitable, but they have **quicker and faster social**

and environmental impact. So, the impact investment logic is more applicable for CE innovation projects.

And going into the networks in general, we have found that **local networks are very important** starting with the resources. Even for the technical elements where a lot of startups and projects are lacking meaningful access to resources, as input or output, for instance their bio products could be input to other companies or other industries in the whole value chain of CE. We have a really nice example where a startup that was recycling plastic transformed in making tiles for the construction sector, has been approached by a large waste management company that wanted to tap into that market and they offered them a strategic partnership to handle their recycled plastic directly.

Geraldine added that this local network, CEEI Aragon and the GoA works on it at local level. **CSIL**, working in market research, added that one of the key points is the market acceptance of readiness to accept circular solution. The question received from companies is to evaluate the readiness of consumers or businesses when in B2B to accept circular products and the willingness to pay for it. So, the readiness, the acceptance and the willingness to pay for it, to understand the breakeven point.

Joanna is asking in terms of operations and logistics, or anything related to the type of business support activities like the type of training or workshops conducted, for instance on how to become circular and identifying the technical expertise, where do you find that technical expertise.

While working on mapping all the ecosystem, at different level regional or national or European, at business support organization level or at the startup level, and also at the level of the similar sister projects, we have identified that when we talk about how to become circular, **we couldn't identify much support activities**. What support activities to identify in this matter, let's say, we have a company that wants to switch from traditional model to a circular model?

Berytech confirms that in Lebanon people understand the concept of CE, but **the challenge is to find experts and to turn these innovations into monetized impact, into practical KPIs**. The lack is from turning the theory into practice.

Q-Plan International, raises that the critical element is that **circular economy is not only waste management, biomass or renewable energy sources**, it's actually not only limited to their own organization or their own operation **it's also about your suppliers**. And most start-ups do not really understand how exactly they can contribute to that, on various angles and dimensions. Under the "Rs" (we have reached over 10 now: Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Rot, Recycle... there are different steps a company can take, not only recycling. They're not thinking about services, they are thinking about internal processes. So better aligning the Rs core service or the core product to what exactly CE is all about, checking inwards but also outwards, can they find better suppliers, can they distribute their bio products to other industries? There was a very good example a few years back with the battery industry in England where all the bio products were given to other industries. For example, they had acid that's normally not re-used, and they give it to a paper factory in Brazil that needed it to for their operations.

Hauke at ULEIL with LCA, covers partially these questions, when you work with LCA databases, you only have the products that are in there, LCA databases are implicitly accounting for all processes, all products that are covered around the world, but they are not complete. Innovative secular product are often not included into the LCA databases. So LCA databases can only cover the common knowledge. But if one would really have a projected LCA that could already anticipate future developments and one could try to combine how would this disseminate and ideally then it's not just about LCA but also about the economic network, input output data or trade data, we could really come up with some big fancy mathematical simulations, but it's we're not yet there. So, it's an indication, it's not just at the startup level, it's also at the science level where we need better data ultimately.

Geraldine adds that from last week's meeting with investors in circular economy, one of the comments was similar to Apostolos, having a common definition about circular economy and looking at the whole spectrum of circular economy.

Then the floor is given to Emmanuel to introduce us an example of a project within the cluster of Vehicles of the future.

- **How to federate a hub's support, the EDIH PVF (Vehicles of the future) case, by EDIH PVF**

An EDIH, set up after a European Commission call for projects called Digital Europe, is a one stop shop support companies towards digitalisation. There are more than 200 EDIH projects around Europe, 50% funded by the EC, and they are all very different, one from another. An EDIH provides solutions to an ecosystem:

- access to technical expertise and testing, as well as the opportunity to "test before you invest"
- providing innovation services, such as advice on financing, training and skills development, which are essential for successful digital transformation
- help companies tackle environmental issues, in particular the use of digital technologies for sustainability and circularity.

EDIH combines the advantages of a regional presence with the opportunities offered by a pan-European network. This regional presence leaves them well placed to provide the services that local businesses need, through the local language and innovation ecosystem. The network's European coverage facilitates the exchange of best practice between hubs in different countries, as well as the provision of specialist services between regions when the required skills are not available locally.

The "Dedicated BFC" project (for the Bourgogne Franche-Comté region), with a consortium made-of 13 partners having sometimes different roadmaps. But they share the same point of view about the needs of the territory and the companies on this region. So, **the main challenge is often to transform competitiveness into coherent and complementary actions dedicated to the region BFC.**

In practical terms, what does DEDIHCATED BFC offer to companies ?

DEDIHCATED BFC : *a one stop shop toward digital transition*

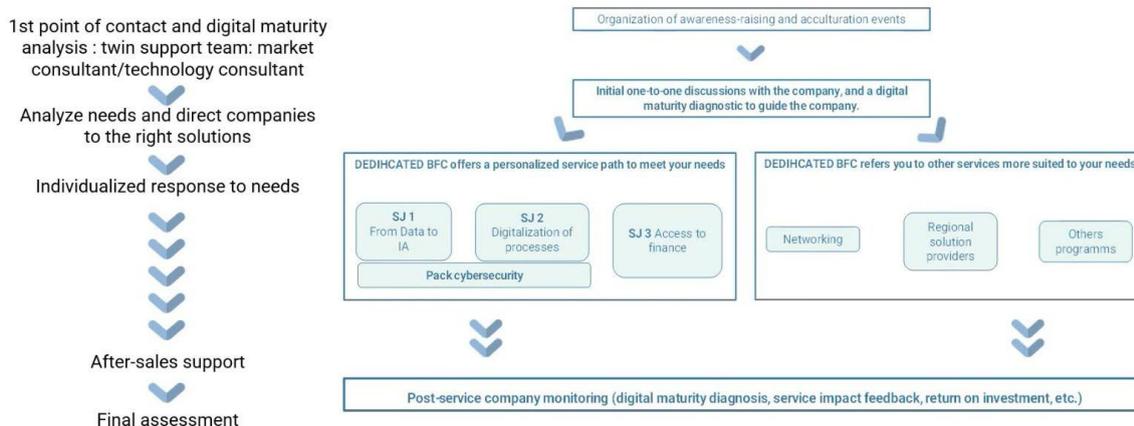


So, when a company has a digital project, the DEDIHCATED BFC makes a diagnostic and suggest services the company could follow. The internal process to support the concept of one-stop-shop

- **1 single point of contact to monitor the project throughout the process, made up of two people: market consultant & technology consultant**
- **Initial diagnostic** allowing to assess the digital maturity and **to design a customise pathway of support**
- Designing of 3 pathways = typical journey of support according to the needs

Services rank from data to IA production processes, digitalization and access to finance.

DEDIHANCED BFC : a one stop shop toward digital transition



The initial diagnostic called digital maturity assessment, is followed by needs analysis and proposition of solutions. Another diagnostic is made after the services provided and sometimes also after to assess the support provided.

The project started 10 months ago, there were key activities to support the concept of one-stop-shop

twin support team: market and technology consultants to provide tailor-made solutions

Regular meetings to ensure significant cohesion among partners

steering meeting at least once a month, ensuring synergies among partners to support companies, to discuss the projects

as often as possible on specific issues (of interest to at least two partners)

Regular meetings to get to know each other’s service offering for each pathway

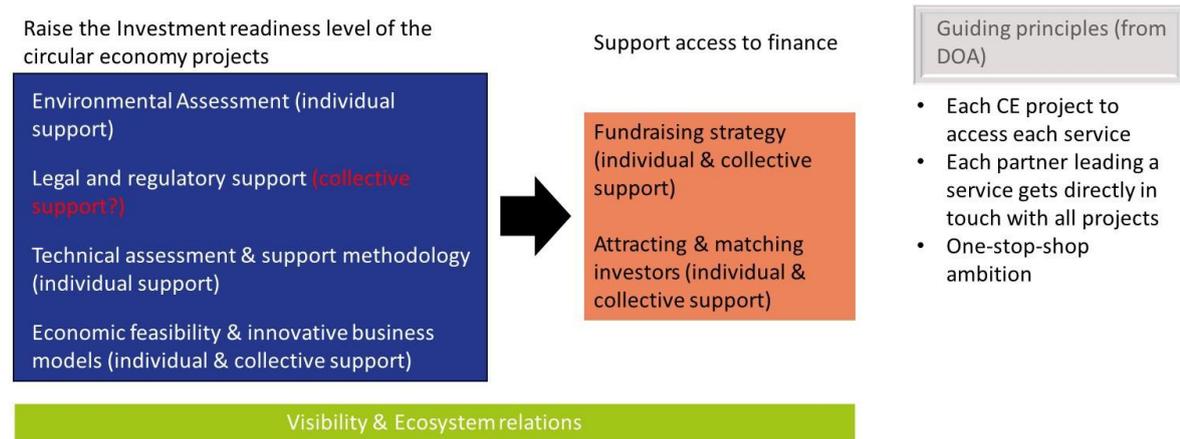
Useful and modern tools to support the companies’ needs and transformation (SaaS access software...)

Networking with regional and European partners to gain momentum and exchange best practices.

Joint and shared communication, led by one partner, with working groups and also subcontracting with also GAC, for a common discourse, a common visual identity and a mutual understanding of each other’s offer and skills – Objective: for partner to speak through one voice (for companies – externally - and for partners - internally)

- Accept that initial work plan could change, be able to adapt the offer to the needs – agility

➤ **RESOURCE experience and vision on next steps**



On the left you see the different aspects that we have been organizing to accelerate the fundraising with a stronger strategy to attract and match companies and investors' expectations.

And for this all, RESOURCE partners have been in touch with the pilot projects, leading their service but as the EDIH one stop shop EDIH PVF presented, we've encountered some issues, sometimes not anticipated, and we want to look at them for an ongoing improvement approach, and hear your thoughts: about it

RESOURCE experience and vision on next steps

Mid-term project observation

| Main issues observed | Potential keys to improve the accelerator |
|--|---|
| TRL of the projects | Project selection / selection criteria |
| Responsiveness of the projects | Design / content of the services |
| Diversity of the projects | Design of the entrepreneur journey |
| Need to refine strategy and strengthen the ambition of the project | Other? |
| Services operated in silos & Global follow-up | |
| Other? | |

One of the first one was the if you want to talk about investment readiness, you also need to look at the TRL of the project, their maturity. We've had some issues with the responsiveness of the project for instance, with the diversity of the projects, not only in terms of maturity but also in terms of topics and focus. Some are running after too many objectives, and we needed to help them refocus. The level of ambition needs to be strengthened even more for CE projects. And the services have been operated in silos and we need to have a global vision, a global follow up on our selected projects.

So, if we want to look at the potential keys to improve our so-called accelerator, we need to better structure the selection process and the selection criteria, also involving all the players around the table to select the right projects and really discuss all the aspects when we select the projects. Is the project ready to already get to for a short term close to investment readiness? We also need to redesign the content of the service, and we also need to design a global entrepreneur's journey.

So, it will be interesting to hear if you've encountered the same issues and how you've been dealing with it if that's the case.

➤ **Recommendations from the audience of experts: how should RESOURCE be positioned and evolve**

Marianne comes back on the EDIH experience, raising 2 or 3 best practice actions made:

- The common and shared communication with objective of external communication but also objective of internal communication that each partner is able to speak through one voice and to speak about his offer but also about the offer of the other partners. This is a good point to discuss.
- Also, the concept of single point of contact to monitor the project through the process. Even if this single point of contact is 2 people in the reality, but this concept of a global of a reference through the process of the transformation.
- And the last point is about the design of the project's journey according to its needs, not like an obligation to do each step, but to have a very customized journey, also agile according to the needs of the project and its evolution.

Those 3 points could be inspiring for RESOURCE's next steps.

Q-Plan International came back on the customization concept. When we finished our acceleration process case, we created a **handbook** which is publicly available, and we tried **to put the process into steps** to see how we can best describe it. And almost in every step, **customizing the business support to the team and to the project is essential**. And also understanding their perception of the need is crucial, to customize the offering and to maintain responsiveness, because if they identify that you are addressing their needs as they perceive it, they will be there, they will seek out your support. This is the case with not just circular adventure, but a lot of acceleration processes where we are trying to streamline the process and to offer things in quantity and not so much customized to each team, each person, as they have a lot of different backgrounds, understanding... This is even more the case **for circular economy** because **things are really vague, so spending time in the beginning of the support to understand what their needs are and how they understand what they need, to customize the solution** to that specific need so that you can secure their buying to the process.

CSIL added one thing again from market perspective, about the design of the journey of a company, one of the most important things that is a disrupting factor in the circular economy concept, **is the new potential markets that circular economy can open for companies** not only in terms of new products but also the idea of products as a service, the idea of varying customers, increase customer long lasting relationship, knowing more about customers. So, in the dialogue with companies, it's really important to discuss opportunities outside the traditional, with different approach of what they have to add to the market. And that's what companies like to discuss, the idea of going to different markets, to expand and to differentiate.

Geraldine asks if participants have had the experience of helping them building for instance an Advisory Board.

CSIL answers she did on the market research level, she provided information, and other colleagues are involved in other form of supporting at the policy level.

Q-Plan International made it more at the community level, instigating a network for communication and advice between start-ups, but also with all the mentors and investors that are being involved. So, it's not like a specific Advisory Board for a for a project, but they have access, and they can ask questions to any of the people that are involved in the network. It's a little more flexible.

Geraldine asks EDIH PVF, about the design of the EDIH business model.

EDIH PVF mentions the EDIH has a continuous analysis of needs so present and future needs for the projection of the companies in the regional area and so the services are created and recreated accordingly. So, the design had to be sort out that it could be returned to the companies and to the partner for the team involved as well as the other teams of the partner. So maybe the main solution is that is very important to it establish links and exchange ideas to maintain everyone every partner's willingness to stay in the consumption and to be attractive enough for the companies. So, it's also the tailor-made constitution.

Joanna concluded that project partners will have the chance to hear more from Q-Plan International and from Berytech on the initiative that they have implemented, in the coming workshop on the best practices identified and that really can help us in refining our business support methodology as well.

Geraldine added that an article will be shared soon about this workshop wand participants will be pinged on LinkedIn.

5.3 CCW3 minutes - 5-6 June 2024. Zaragoza

Day 1 – 5th June

Consortium Meeting agenda and participants

| | |
|-------|--|
| 09:00 | Welcome message and intro |
| 09:15 | Consortium Meeting Part 1 |
| 11:25 | Workshop on methodology (CCW): finalizing the support for CE projects – to be assessed by experts |
| 12:00 | Concluding words (5min) |

Participants

- CEEI Aragon Pedro Yus
- GAC Group Geraldine Quetin - Ana Tasheva - Christian Ranieri (online)
- AITIIP David Ponce - Lucas Rivera
- EBN Joanna Abi Abdallah
- University of Leiden Hauke Ward - Jiunhua Zhang
- ANCES Eva Maria Elena Ramos
- GoA Santiago Ruiz - Ana Sanz

DAY 1 MINUTES

WP2 Circular Economy Project Preparation – Aitiip: Methodology: in cooperation with the REDOL project (creating an ecosystem, implementing the solutions) create a framework, customised to the CRL (Circular readiness level) and too Circular Economy. By providing this framework, we can analyse whether pilots' technologies are ready to enter the market in Aragon. The framework will be focused on sectors in Aragon – e.g. waste, sustainability, innovation, etc. Methodology will include assessment of the region, best practices, readiness level...

Geraldine mentions that in the methodology we are missing an important point: the HR dimension (help the entrepreneurs to complete their teams) most of all, adding a sales dimension in the team. Also, Advisory boards (and scientific board) can be of great value, if well chosen, providing legitimacy and credibility to the project. Accelerators usually help on that very much.

Finally, TRL is not really needed to accelerate private funding process.

WP4 - Replicability: benchmarking & policies, EBN

- Going beyond the 5 Pillars for Best Practices
- Focus on the 360-degree assessment, tailored coaching and expert intervention on business and technical matters

Day 2 – 6th June

Agenda and participants

| | |
|-------|--|
| 09:00 | Consortium Meeting Part 2 |
| 11:00 | Workshop on RESOURCE methodology assessment and support ⇒ New call for projects to be launched and to be supported through our methodology ⇒ CCW Creation of a new governance model to fund CE projects (HR & Board aspects) |
| 11:15 | Workshop on RESOURCE fundraising methodology |
| 11:40 | Workshop on next events co-construction session and planning of activities (<i>by GAC</i>) |
| 12:30 | AOB/ Concluding words (15min) |
| 12:45 | End |

Participants

- CEEI Aragon Pedro Yus
- GAC Group Geraldine Quetin & Ana Tasheva
- AITIIP David Ponce - Lucas Rivera
- EBN Joanna Abi Abdallah
- University of Leiden Hauke Ward & Jiunhua Zhang
- ANCES Eva Maria Elena Ramos
- GoA Santiago Ruiz

DAY 2 MINUTES**Pilot projects and investors - CEEI**

Eva presented the methodology for the mapping of investors

Geraldine asked if the pilots are ready to meet investors, Eva answer that some (6?) of them
Details about pilot projects were shared

General recommendation from Geraldine: again, give them business mentors, to help them save them precious time. They need to meet entrepreneurs, people who have the experience of shifting / growing their business...

Agreements in progress for funding

- BANKS: agreements in order to achieve better conditions for CE companies.
- FOREIGN COMPANIES: e.g., agreement with CHUBU Electric Power Co, a Japanese electric company interested in CE and Food related projects (industrial and agricultural). They will meet 2 projects. They also are corporate investors. 1 pilot would be very interesting and ready enough to meet with them.
- REGIONAL FAMILY OFFICE: industrial groups looking for new opportunities

CEEI and ANCES will come back to us with clear explanation on Tax exemption

[confidential details were omitted here]