

OPERATIONALIZING REGIONAL CIRCULARITY:
BEST PRACTICES FROM TURKU

MULTI-STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION FOR A CIRCULAR TURKU



GOVERNANCE



Local and regional governments can act as enablers and platforms for new circular economy solutions and can accelerate their adoption by effectively connecting businesses, universities and residents. The city of Turku aims to speed up the circular transition in the region through continuously strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration.

CONTEXT

The city of Turku and its surrounding region host a vibrant ecosystem of circular economy actors and front-runner initiatives contributing to sustainable resource management. Although much remains to be done in each sector to adopt the circular economy as primary model of production and operation, there are clear existing strengths and a significant amount of circular activities and stakeholders in the region.

Since 2015 when the city set the target of implementing the principles of resource wisdom by 2040, the priority has been to acknowledge and build on these existing strengths through direct collaboration with regional, national and international stakeholders.



KEY ACTORS

The city of Turku is actively collaborating with regional and national actors to operationalize the circular economy. On the regional level, public collaborators include for example the Service Centre for Sustainable Development and Energy of Southwest Finland (Valonia), the Regional Council of Southwest Finland and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Southwest Finland (ELY Centre).¹

In addition, Turku is involving local businesses as well as regional and local waste, energy and water companies in its circular economy strategy by collecting their inputs and incentivizing them to include circular economy principles into their work.

On the national level, Turku engages with stakeholders such as the Ministry of Environment. Exchanges with research institutions that develop tools for operationalizing circular economy, such as the Finnish Environment Institute, are also central partners for Turku in widening the knowledge base and outlining key actions.

Frontrunner municipality networks in Finland, such as the Finnish Sustainable Communities (FISU) network, are an important source of inspiration and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

ACTION

The aim of the city of Turku is to design a collaborative action plan for operationalizing the circular economy from the bottom up. To ensure needs-based policymaking, full clarity over who is active on the topic regionally and what challenges and opportunities they identify, is a key requirement.

Upon joining ICLEI's Green Circular Cities Coalition in 2018 and in order to get a clear picture of all actors involved in the circular economy, the city of Turku commissioned a comprehensive stakeholder mapping study to the Turku based Finland Futures Research Centre (FFRC). The study used the Green Circular Cities Coalition's thematic framing to map all actors involved in 1) planning and governance actions linked to the circular economy, 2) water, energy and food systems, 3) buildings and constructions, 4) resource management, 5) public procurement and 6) industrial symbiosis projects.

The mapping identified over 700 different circular economy actors in the Turku region, which were compiled in a living database. The most notable group consists of 270 businesses visibly implementing circular activities or being partners of public operators. Approximately 150 focused on research and training. 90 circular economy projects were identified within the Turku region as well as 20 different circular economy networks.

To strengthen information flow on circular economy between public actors, a circular economy working group has been created in 2018. The informal group gathers regularly to discuss thematic issues, identify common challenges and find synergies. The group includes representatives from the Turku City Group, local government officials, businesses, universities and regional institutions. Platforms like this provide a low threshold for public actors to directly receive feedback and inputs.

A core element in the multi-stakeholder collaboration for Turku is engaging in active discussion with residents, communities and businesses.

¹ The regional council is responsible for the regional strategy and the regional land use plan, and promotes regional and other co-operation between municipalities with key stakeholders in the development of the province, and co-operation between the different provinces. The ELY Centres promote regional development by carrying out the executive and development tasks of the state administration in the regions.



The city of Turku is an active partner and initiator of local business networks, such as the Bastu business enabler and circular economy hub Topinpuisto. Another example is the CleanTurku cluster, conducted by Turku Science Park Ltd., a strategic entity of the city of Turku. The CleanTurku cluster focuses on bio and circular economy and cleantech, including more than 100 innovative companies with technologies, services, processes and products decreasing environmental impacts.

Resident engagement is also continuously strengthened. The city of Turku makes an effort to keep residents updated on how the work towards carbon neutrality is proceeding, by communicating actively, organising events and engaging residents in discussion on social media.

In addition to local and regional platforms, the city of Turku is also engaging nationally on the topic of the circular economy. Turku has a role in the preparation process of the national strategic programme for the advancement of the circular economy, through a thematic group on "Municipalities and Regions".

SUCCESS FACTORS

- The **informal and collaborative approach to multi-stakeholder consultations** has allowed clarifying roles and responsibilities and to gain a realistic understanding of the regional situation on circular economy.
- Turku's **ambitious climate and resource protection goals**, which are enshrined in the city's strategy, have created a momentum for regional actors to collaborate and act on the topic.
- Turku is home to **numerous innovative businesses and universities of excellence** - all situated within a small geographical area which allows for direct cooperation.

IMPACTS

- **Increasing circular activities and stakeholders:** Public actors and contractors have the responsibility to create an attractive platform for developing businesses to try their new solutions and create success stories for the whole region. Enabling measures from the public sector include incorporating

circular principles for example in procurements, infrastructure, land use planning and business collaboration.

- **Replication:** The bottom-up approach undertaken by Turku to kick start its work on the circular economy has inspired several other local governments of the ICLEI network to conduct similar multi-stakeholder screenings within their jurisdiction.
- **Collaboration into practice:** The best practices outlined in the following case studies are all well connected to one another. There is a high awareness from regional circular economy actors of who is doing what and which synergies can be played on. This offers an ideal ground for further action on the circular economy.
- **Engaging with national-level stakeholders and processes:** Active collaboration and exchanges with national-level processes, such as the preparation of the Finnish strategic programme of the advancement of circular economy, allow Turku to learn from simultaneous processes and strengthen the city's profiling on circularity.



NEXT STEPS

Moving forward, Turku aims at strengthening the enabling role of public sector actors and to better reflect regional stakeholders' inputs in future city-led endeavors. As part of the Circular Turku project, a collaborative roadmap will be designed and operationalized through an online platform that will facilitate information flows and direct cooperation. One of the main priorities of the project is also to better include residents into the roadmap and collaboration platform.

