

Circular Economy in Jonava: Report on 1st CirLab workshop

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Document Overview

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Table of contents

1. Main info about Cirlab in Jonava	5
2. Sessions and agenda of Cirlab in Jonava	5
3. Key insights from focus groups.....	6

1. Main info about Cirlab in Jonava

The main aim of Cirlab in Jonava was to promote participatory dialogue and gather qualitative insights from public sector professionals by exploring how local public sector organizations perceive, apply, and encounter challenges in implementing circular economy (CE) practices.

Date & Place. The 1st CIRLab in Jonava was held on 6 March 2025 in Jonava (Lithuania), at the Jonava District Municipality (Jeronimas Ralys Hall), as part of Work Package 2 (WP2) of the ECLECTIC project.

Event type. This CIRLab in Jonava was conducted as a practical workshop.

Participant number. 50 participants from Jonava public sector (schools, kindergartens, swimming pool, hospital, fire stations, public transport, municipality administration, etc.) participated in the event.

2. Sessions and agenda of Cirlab in Jonava

The CIRLab event in Jonava was structured into two main sessions:

Session I: Sharing Knowledge [1 hour].

This session focused on building a shared understanding of circular economy principles and showcasing relevant insights from the ECLECTIC project:

- Opening remarks by the Jonava municipal administration [presented by Mayor Povilas Beisys]
- Why is the circular economy important in cities? [presented by Lina Dagilienė]
- The potential for circularity in Jonava's public sector: Research results [presented by Jurgita Bruneckienė]
- Good practices of the circular economy in the public sector [presented by Visvaldas Varžinskas]

Session II: Focus Groups [2 hours]

This interactive session applied the World Café methodology. A total of 50 participants from various public sector institutions were divided into five groups. Each group rotated among five moderators, discussing a set of five predefined questions:

- Q1. What activities related to the circular economy is your organisation doing or has done in the past?
- Q2. What are the challenges your organisation faces in implementing activities related to the circular economy?
- Q3. What challenges does your organisation face in implementing (green) public procurement?
- Q4. In which area of the public sector do you see the greatest potential or opportunities for the circular economy?
- Q5. What would help your organisation to increase its activities related to the circular economy?

This format fostered peer learning, encouraged open discussion, and enabled the collection of valuable qualitative insights across diverse institutional perspectives.

3. Key insights from focus groups

Q1. Existing CE activities in Jonava public sector

The discussions revealed (see Table 1) that Jonava's public institutions are already implementing a wide range of circular economy (CE) initiatives. These efforts are often driven by motivations such as cost savings, environmental awareness, and compliance with regulatory frameworks. The CE activities span multiple, interconnected spheres—ranging from waste reduction and energy efficiency to sustainable procurement and education. This diverse activity landscape demonstrates that public institutions in Jonava possess both the willingness and the foundational capacity to contribute meaningfully to CE goals.

Table 1. Existing CE activities in Jonava public sector

Categories of CE activities	Examples of activities
Waste Reduction, Sorting, and Reuse	Waste sorting and composting (in schools and institutions). Reuse of various types of waste. Participation in awareness programs like the "Waste Culture Exam". Use of sewage sludge in agriculture. Exchange programs ("Donate a Dress", "Eco Market").
Reuse and Exchange of Furniture, Items, and Clothing	Centralized platforms/funds for furniture exchange in schools. Reuse and repair of uniforms and clothing. Exhibitions and education like "Revived Value". Toy and book exchanges (especially among preschool children).
Energy and Water Efficiency	Motion sensors, light-saving technologies, SMART boards. Use of renewable energy (remote solar power stations). Energy saving plans (e.g., reduced usage at sports arena). Door closers for heat conservation. Rainwater collection, grease filtration in wastewater.
Use of Eco-Friendly Materials and Alternatives	Use of ecological cleaning products (in schools and care homes). Replacing aerosols and disinfectants with eco-friendly alternatives. Purchase of long-lasting, natural products (e.g., wooden toys). Switching from paper towels to reusable cloths in kitchens
Sustainable Mobility and Transport	E-bikes, mobility training for staff. Transport for people with disabilities (vehicles with lifts). Development of eco-friendly public transport (e-buses). "Carpool with a Friend" initiative to encourage eco-friendly commuting.
Education, Awareness, and Project-Based Initiatives	Projects like "Sustainable School". Environmental clean-up campaigns ("Let's Do It") with municipal cooperation. Sustainability education. Fashion shows made from unwanted clothing (sustainable fashion). Use of reusable branded items—bottles, bags (in schools, hospitals, municipalities)

Q2. Barriers to CE activities implementation in Jonava public sector

Despite significant progress, Jonava public institutions face multiple structural, financial, and administrative barriers that impede CE scaling (see Table 2).

Table 2. Barriers to CE activities in Jonava public sector

Categories of barriers	Examples of barriers
Structural and systemic challenges	Lack of funding to implement technological circular innovation Lack of budget flexibility –funds cannot be carried over to the next year, leading to overspending; lack of flexibility (especially in the areas of food and fixed assets). Regulatory weaknesses –replacing a whole item instead of a part; funding rules limit access to higher quality, longer-term items; Over-regulation-excessive rules, e.g. lack of possibility to exchange items between public institutions.
Product-specific challenges	Over-regulation-creating excess food, i.e. portions have to be larger than the actual amount eaten. Unusual food for children-more waste. Procurement discourages repair work. The will to reduce paper consumption is too low.
Organisational and coordination challenges	Lack of objectives and systematic approach: no clear objectives for circularity; no system to monitor progress; no results visible even when actions are taken. Lack of knowledge-no knowledge of how to implement circular solutions or no visible results. Lack of coordination - e.g. no "resource broker" or system of coordination among public institutions
Behavioral challenges	Habits-e.g. using both paper and digital copies. Reluctance to repair items-due to attitude or cost; "new is better than repaired", Comfort zone-doing things as they always have been done,even though inefficient or unsustainable (e.g. a printer in every classroom). Fear of maintenance of shared items.

Finance-related and procurement-related constraints emerged as some of the most frequently mentioned barriers to implementing CE activities in Jonava public sector. Budget limitations often make eco-friendly products and repair-based procurement unaffordable. Although such choices may offer long-term value, the high upfront costs are incompatible with short-term budgeting cycles,

Additionally, the public procurement system is seen as overly rigid. Tendering procedures are complex, technical specifications are difficult to formulate, and responsibility for procurement often falls to frontline managers who may lack the necessary expertise. These factors create significant procedural burdens that deter innovation and flexibility.

Moreover, limited awareness further restricts the adoption of circular solutions. There is often reluctance to accept reused or repaired items—particularly in settings such as schools—where aesthetics, perceived quality, and novelty are prioritized over sustainability.

Q3. (Green) public procurement challenges

Green public procurement is being implemented in Jonava's public institutions; however, it remains a significant challenge due to various procedural, financial, and systemic obstacles (see Table 3).

Table 3. Challenges to green public procurement in Jonava public sector

Categories of challenges	Examples of challenges
Administrative challenges	<p>Difficulty in preparing specifications.</p> <p>Too expensive.</p> <p>Overly formal procedures.</p> <p>Excessive responsibility is placed on institutions.</p> <p>Centralized system with a lot of control and inspections.</p> <p>No support from the procurement/technical departments.</p> <p>Lack of information on potential suppliers</p> <p>Repairs and refurbishing should be prioritized, but it's not supported.</p>
Clarity and quality challenges	<p>Uncertainty about what will actually be purchased</p> <p>Fake certificates</p> <p>Service quality is questionable</p> <p>Limited supplier list in CPVO (Central Public Procurement Organization)</p>
Systemic approach challenges	<p>Perception that "green procurement" means only cheap products.</p> <p>Long-term value (price, durability) not sufficiently considered.</p> <p>Repairs often cost more than buying new items.</p> <p>Public awareness: preference for new and attractive items, not sustainable ones.</p>

Green procurement is frequently misunderstood as a cost-saving tactic rather than a strategy to promote long-term efficiency and sustainability. This misconception leads to the preference for low-cost products over those designed with circular features such as durability, reparability, or reusability.

A key obstacle is the limited availability of certified suppliers and the lack of clear environmental standards, which makes it difficult for public institutions to make well-informed procurement decisions. The presence of fake certifications and the absence of quality control after purchase further undermine trust in green products.

On a more positive note, sectors such as food and hygiene products were identified as examples where green criteria are better defined and the procurement process is smoother. This suggests that standardisation and clarity of criteria are essential factors for successful implementation.

However, some categories face especially acute challenges, namely:

- Vehicles: There is a lack of supply that meets green procurement criteria.

- Repairs: High repair costs remain a barrier, particularly for electronics, furniture, and equipment such as lawn mowers.

Q4. Public sector opportunities for CE

Several areas within the public sector were identified as high-potential domains for CE advancement:

1. Energy efficiency: The transition to solar power and use of electric vehicles show significant promise in reducing the public sector's carbon footprint. Yet, upfront costs and the need for technical expertise slow adoption.
2. Waste reduction and reuse: Digitalization of administrative functions, introduction of compost bins, and the culture of reusing goods through flea markets or donation drives offer scalable, low-barrier pathways.
3. Water use efficiency: Rainwater harvesting and smart tap technologies are easy wins for reducing water usage, especially in schools and sports facilities.

4. Education and behavior change: Public institutions—especially schools—play a pivotal role in modeling CE behaviors. Initiatives that engage parents and students can generate ripple effects across communities.
5. Cross-sector cooperation: There is high interest in sharing resources, experiences, and best practices across institutions. However, the absence of structured coordination mechanisms often leaves these efforts informal and fragmented.

Q5. Enablers which help to scale CE activities in Jonava public sector

Participants proposed several enabling conditions to intensify their CE engagement (see table 4).

Table 4. Enablers and conditions, which help to scale CE activities

CE activity area	Examples of enablers	Applicable sector
Reducing food waste	Reduce plastic food packaging, as school canteens receive a lot of packaging, all in small packets; the food waste manager decides on the use of the waste, not the public organisation; decrease food waste that is in line with the current hygiene standards-buffet principle for older pupils/donate to employees/ farmers	Mostly education sector
Enabling digital tools	Going digital/ going paperless; real-time monitoring of energy consumption/ sensors as a preventive measure; sensory-activated taps; robotization; electric cars & more electric bikes	All sectors
Fostering sharing culture and responsibility	Promote a culture of sharing second-hand items-more systematic coordination from individual initiatives to more general ones, between different organisations; getting parents involved; collaboration on best practices; education of children on hygiene product use and other projects.	Mostly education sector, partial social care
Enabling water reuse	Wastewater collection and water reuse; rainwater projects in educational institutions; sensor-activated taps.	Swimming pool and fire stations
Improving waste sorting behaviour	Dealing with specific waste streams (health sector); improve the sorting of citizens' food waste; composting bins do not hold enough compost during the season	All sectors& citizens
Cooperation and Coordination	closer inter-institutional cooperation, knowledge sharing between institutions (items, best practices), learning from other institutions' experience	All sectors

Despite the variety of proposed pathways to scale up CE activities, participants emphasised that these suggestions extend beyond technical upgrades. They also involve strengthening organisational cooperation, enhancing knowledge sharing, and establishing effective collaboration mechanisms. This point was particularly stressed during the CIRLab discussions.

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The CIRLab in Jonava reveals a public sector that is motivated in CE activation. The presence of numerous CE activities implemented in Jonava public sector indicates readiness and capacity for change. However, fragmented implementation, limited procurement flexibility, and a lack of inter-institutional coordination still create inefficiencies.



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