

# TARTU CIRCULAR ECONOMY TRANSITION, ESTONIA



*The Tartu County Circular Economy Transition Arena brought together NGOs and other local actors to foster the transition towards a circular economy in Tartu County. Through four transition arena workshops and a wider agenda event, significant contributions were made to the county's Circular Economy Roadmap as well as potential created for forming a local network of frontrunners in the circular economy.*

## WHO WAS INVOLVED?

Four workshops were carried out with around 18 representatives of social enterprises and NGOs including neighborhood and advocacy organizations and foundations. A wider event for introducing and discussing the results was organised with 60 participants including representatives from municipal governments, business sector, NGOs and the general public.

## IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES

The main challenge of the process was how to speed up transition to a circular economy in cooperation with civil society organizations and other local circular economy actors.

The arena process was connected with drafting of the Tartu County Roadmap of Circular Economy affecting 8 local municipalities. The arena process helped map all relevant civil society and small business actors that are already working for the circular transition and get their views and recommendations to the roadmap process.

## ABOUT THE PROCESS

The arena process consisted of four workshops and a wider agenda event. The first workshop was used to map the current state of the circular economy in Tartu County, using the X-Curve visual tool aimed at creating a common understanding of the circular economy dynamics currently at play. Based on this understanding of trends, a joint vision was created.

The second workshop was used for mapping the things that are stopping the local actors from moving faster and the things that could support them and the society as a whole.

The third workshop focused on formulating concrete suggestions to the roadmap. At the final workshop, the participants voted on actions and planned collaboration and new projects for the future. The integration of ideas and recommendations into the Circular Economy Roadmap was discussed in a wider event with local authorities and other stakeholders.



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## RESULTS

For the first time the process brought together local actors leading the change in sustainability in different sectors, creating a possibility for forming a local network. The arena helped participants to understand their role and connection with the transition to circular economy. The public discussion and engagement event tapped into wider interest in what the municipalities are planning and a possibility for the municipalities to get a feel of expectations from the public before the final draft of the roadmap.

The transition arena group provided feedback and 34 concrete proposals to the draft of the roadmap, focusing on 4 key areas of impact: 1) community involvement and co-creation, 2) recycling, 3) sustainable food systems, and 4) the monitoring of roadmap outcomes. Half of the proposals were taken into account in the final roadmap. Finally, the transition arena group was brought together with the policymakers to discuss possible cooperation. The recommendations helped public authorities to take into account the civil society view and needs. They also helped to make the final version of the roadmap more concrete.

The following future cooperation plans were discussed together with Association of Municipalities of Tartu County:

- A plan to start an annual networking meeting of circular economy stakeholders and promoters, to exchange information, discuss the progress, ask questions, make plans and find partners for further activities in implementing the roadmap.
- Focusing specifically on waste reform starting 2025, developing cooperation formats between local authority recycling stations and REuse organizations.
- In cooperation with experts in relevant fields (e.g. behavioral sciences) designing science-based interventions in people's behavior to introduce and deploy REuse models.
- Mapping of existing circular initiatives as well as promoters in communities (schools, libraries, community centres, cultural centres, churches, etc.).

In addition, 12 organizations got to synchronize their plans for 2025 and engage new partners to empower their activities.

***"In the end, I think the people-to-people connection is the most important thing. That we just talk to each other as people. People will come out of their personal bubbles, and then they will have more courage to bring their own opinions to the table."***

## CONTACT

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