

Better Knowledge



Urban Resource
Centres

Action 7 - Promote Urban Resource Centres for waste prevention, re-use and recycling

Urban Resource Centres are the testbeds for circular solutions at city level but the policy challenges hindering the implementation need to be addressed at European level.

Scope and Output

The Partnership identified that the social and behavioural side of a transition towards the circular economy and how citizens will be involved in the transition process are still not adequately addressed at local level. There is also a need to transform the traditional recycling stations to fit with the priorities of the waste hierarchy and enable more circular resource loops at local level.

Our solution is to promote the so-called Urban Resource Centres where the circular economy is implemented at local level, serving as an arena to work with waste prevention, re-use, repair and recycling at the same time as new business models and jobs are created. The centres also serve as a meeting place for new collaborations, innovations and inclusion of citizens to ensure a participatory approach to the local circular solutions. The Partnership has collected experiences from 12 different Urban Resource Centres, identifying key barriers and success factors. To ensure sustainability, we have successfully established an URBACT Action planning network to develop the concept further with 10 cities.

Drivers and Barriers

Urban Resource Centres are being established all over European cities and there is a multitude of projects, programs and networks working to promote the position these centres have in the circular transition in cities. There is a growing understanding among urban authorities that working with these types of centres can enable more innovation and local circular resource loops. The success factors behind some of these centres and initiatives are a wide variety of stakeholders involved, co-location, small scale testing and experimentation, as well as a strong link to the social economy.

The centres need tools and resources to be able to scale up their activities and develop a viable business model. There are still regulatory obstacles within the current waste legislation that create challenges in the operations of these centres and it is a growing need to look at ways of capturing their impact in the form of unified performance indicators.

Potential impact

The implementation of this action has contributed to collecting knowledge about different innovative approaches to Urban Resource Centres in European cities, which has led to better knowledge on how cities can work with waste prevention, re-use and recycling at local level. As a result of the knowledge collected, the Partnership has organized a network of cities dedicated to taking this work forward in the URBACT Action planning Network “Resourceful Cities”. Ideally, this will help European cities find effective tools to establish and facilitate for Urban resource centres. These centres have a multitude of functions depending on the focus, but the aim is that they all include social, environmental and economic functions that help stimulate a more circular economy at local level.



How will this help the new Circular Economy Action Plan of the European Commission?

The promotion of these centres will enable new spaces for circular solutions at local level, enabling more citizen participation, innovation and new circular business models. By promoting these types of centres, the Commission will support test beds where solutions will be implemented and experiences harnessed that can feed European policymaking.

These centres share some common barriers and success factors that the Partnership already has identified, and these aspects can be addressed directly in the new Circular Economy working program of the European Commission.

Recommendations from the Partnership to the EU Commission

- There should be funding made available to pilot larger scale Urban Resource Centre-projects, also connecting this to industrial symbiosis.
- Size and scalability are crucial and there is a need to find a viable business case for these types of centres.
- Development of indicators to be able to measure the progress is important; this should be linked to the reporting on re-use and waste prevention at Member State level.
- Member States should get on board and develop measures in their waste prevention programmes that support the establishment of Urban Resource centres and collect valuable knowledge from the implementation.

The necessary next steps

- Promote the role that these centres play as urban test beds for the circular economy
- Ensure that resources and funds are directed to solving the challenge of scalability
- Highlight the policy challenges that come out of the establishment of these types of centres and promote it on a European level
- Ensure a good learning environment for all the knowledge generated within the different programs, projects and networks promoting Urban Resource Centres

Where to find more information:

See the full classification with recommendations [here](#).

The main points are summarized in [this infographic](#).

Connection to the SDGs and contributions to better governance



Better Governance: Urban Resource Centres can work as a meeting space for the citizens, the city administration, the private sector, NGOs and academia. By having a physical space where actors meet, this can enable new types of collaborations and partnerships where you find common ground on sustainable solutions. There is an urgent need to connect to new stakeholders, create new synergies and work to break down the silos.

