

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND REGIONAL ASPECTS OF A CIRCULAR ECONOMY



# CONFERENCE SOCIO-ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND REGIONAL ASPECTS OF A CIRCULAR ECONOMY LOCAL WORKSHOP AND MATCHMAKING

## 1. Introduction of Ecolnn project and Virtual Lab

The local matchmaking event took place in Pécs on 20th of April during the two days international conference of Transdanubian Research Department. The key topic of the conference was the socio-economic, environmental and regional aspects of a circular economy. The workshop started with the introduction of the Ecolnn project and the presentation of the newly developed Virtual Lab by György Jelenka (Entrepreneurs' Centre of Somogy County Foundation). Its aim was to demonstrate its functionalities and attract new users. As a result of the project collaboration of researchers, innovators and companies in the respective field will be established, and a virtual platform for companies to present their eco problems and for eco-innovators to present their eco-innovative ideas and solutions will be created. Furthermore, in scope of the project practical trainings called Green innovation forum have been organized, with a pitching and matchmaking event for green business ideas, i. e. a physical platform for investors, start-ups, entrepreneurs, researchers and developers to meet and network. Summer schools for students and early stage innovations from the Danube region will create an opportunity for stakeholders to gain unique skills on how to put ideas into practice.





## 2. EcoInn Roundtable Plenary Session

After the introduction of the moderator and the experts the roundtable plenary session began, which was held in Hungarian with English translation. The 41 participants had the possibility to ask and to comment the topics.

### The experts of the roundtable

- Gergely Tóth (chair of the roundtable) KÖVET Association for Sustainable Economies – secretary general
- Cecília Mezei dr. - University of Kaposvár, associate professor
- Tibor Kiss – Biokom Nonprofit Ltd., general director
- Balázs Kiss – Tolna County Development Agency, project manager
- Miklós Hanti – Digital Welfare Nonprofit Ltd, project manager



### Topics discussed:

- How to support the cooperation R&D and SMEs
- What is the problem in cooperation of R&D and SMEs
- Discussion about virtual lab and functions
- Regional effects on eco-innovative projects
- Personal experiences from side R&D and SMEs

### Conclusions:

- The participants confirmed that a major change should be happen in people's mind in case of the use of resources and the eco thinking.
- The technological infrastructure of the environmental industry develops fast, and had reached a proper level, but this was not followed by changing of ecosystem-based approach – neither from side of SMEs, nor from side of public opinion
- R&D sector has already had visible and significant result, but unfortunately there are only few companies in the region, who would be involved in the practical implementation.
- It is also a problem, that there is only a weak support from the government side and the rules are often overregulated, and eco-innovation based incubator programs are missing.
- The local governments are very passive in this area, their representatives rarely attend professional events like this, but their role is dominant because of the proper formulation of the regulatory environment they could help for introducing of innovative technologies and for business development, and this effects which would also be favorable impact for the settlements and for the local governments.
- There are several successful actions which operate well in case of the dissemination of the eco-innovation in foreign countries, but quite often it is very hard to implement these best practices in Hungary.
- It has unanimously determined that it is much easier to reach goals at a local level, as at country level. Always the bottom-up initiatives on local level give longer-term successes, whether this is the eco-innovation development of the whole region household consumption of the entire region or whether it is a local enterprise's eco-innovation development. It is easier to move local forces, and it's easier to find each other.

- Primarily, we see that the reason for the absence of two partners finding each other, that the together thinking between the two side is missing. It seems to emerge that researchers and developers also go for their own eco-innovation ideas and the enterprises themselves are trying to navigate also alone in this topic. There are few points when it would be finished with the project from the initial idea to implementation. The two parties have difficulty finding each other. This could provide assistance the virtual lab, so the realization of the idea became a positive feedback.

### 3. One to one matchmaking, networking

After the roundtable the networking session begun among the participants, and they had the opportunity to share ideas with each other, and react for the questions and meet with the potential partners informally and separately.

