

Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships project
No. 2022-1-LV01-KA220-VET-000089171

**Baltic Green Leadership: VET Students as Agents
of Change / Green Leadership"**

Overview

**"Best practices and challenges for
green and circular technologies in
the Baltic region"
-2023**

PARTNERS



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Introduction

Baltic partners from Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania –



are implementing Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships project No. 2022-1-LV01-KA220-VET-000089171 “Baltic Green Leadership: VET Students as Agents of Change / Green Leadership”.

The project’s aim is to promote VET role and leadership in green transition. The project result will be a training program for VET teachers, trainers and managers including innovative teaching and learning approaches for acquiring green skills at VET schools.

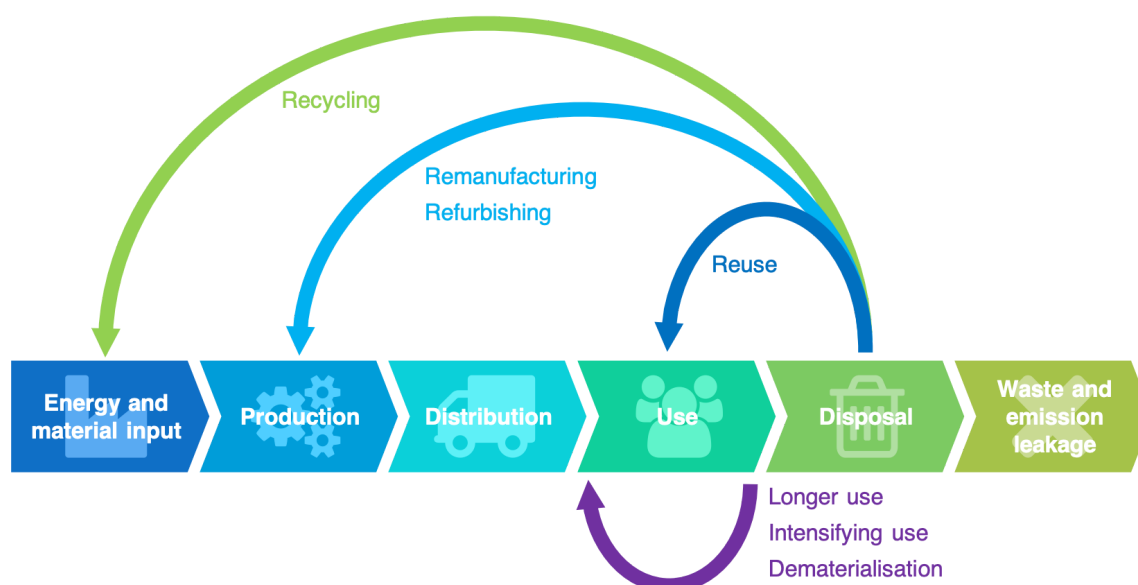
The project partners carried out interviews with companies in different sectors in their countries in order to develop a list of green and circular skills and collect essential information that is necessary to create the training programme. The interview questions helped identify the gaps, opportunities, and priorities for promoting circularity in organizations or industry, and develop a roadmap for transitioning to a more sustainable and regenerative business model.

This overview "Best practices and challenges for green and circular technologies in the Baltic region" is developed using the collected information from various companies. It outlines the current and future skill gaps and shortages in the companies in different sectors related to green jobs and technologies in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

The overview might be helpful to those who want to get the main insights of the concept of green and circular economy and learn about initiatives and best practices in the Baltic states and Finland. The overview concludes with a list of green and circular skills to be developed for the employees in companies from different sectors.

Brief summary of the concept of green and circular economy

The concepts of the green economy and the circular economy are innovative approaches aimed at addressing environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development. They both emphasize the efficient use of resources, reduction of waste, and minimization of environmental impact.



An illustration of the Circular Economy concept

By Geissdoerfer, M., Pieroni, M.P., Pigosso, D.C. and Soufani, K. - Geissdoerfer, M., Pieroni, M.P., Pigosso, D.C. and Soufani, K., 2020. Circular business models: A review. Journal of Cleaner Production, p.123741.https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Martin_Geissdoerfer2/publication/343810965_Circular_business_models_A_review/links/5f628dd092851c07896d7dd3/Circular-business-models-A-review.pdf, CC BY 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=97396208>

Key features of the Green economy

The **green economy** is an economic system that seeks to reconcile economic growth with environmental sustainability. It focuses on creating value and wealth while also ensuring that natural resources are managed and used in a way that minimizes negative ecological and social impacts. The green economy aims to transition from traditional, resource-intensive industries to more sustainable alternatives.

Key features of the **green economy** include:

✓ Sustainable Production and Consumption:

The green economy promotes the production of goods and services that have a lower environmental impact. It encourages the adoption of cleaner production methods, energy-efficient technologies, and sustainable consumption patterns.

✓ Renewable Energy:

Renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind, hydro, and biomass, play a central role in the green economy. They offer alternatives to fossil fuels, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and dependence on finite resources.

✓ Resource Efficiency:

Efficient use of resources is a fundamental principle. This includes minimizing waste generation, optimizing material use, and promoting recycling and reuse.

✓ Ecosystem Conservation:

The green economy recognizes the importance of healthy ecosystems for long-term economic viability. Conservation of biodiversity, restoration of ecosystems, and sustainable land and water management are key aspects.

✓ Job Creation:

The shift toward a green economy can create new employment opportunities in sectors like renewable energy, green technology, and environmental services.

✓ Inclusive Development:

Social equity is a core principle. The green economy aims to ensure that economic growth benefits all segments of society, especially marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Key features of the Circular economy

The **circular economy** is a regenerative economic model that seeks to redefine the traditional "take-make-waste" linear approach. It aims to design out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use for as long as possible and closing the loop through recycling, refurbishment, and remanufacturing.

Key principles of the **circular economy** include:

✓ **Design for Longevity:**

Products are designed with durability and repairability in mind, allowing for extended lifecycles and reducing the need for frequent replacements.

✓ **Resource Loops:**

Instead of disposing of products at the end of their use, materials are kept in circulation through recycling, upcycling, and repurposing.

✓ **Waste Minimization:**

The circular economy aims to minimize waste generation at every stage of the product lifecycle, from production to consumption and disposal.

✓ **Sharing Economy:**

Sharing and collaborative consumption models, such as car-sharing and tool libraries, contribute to optimized resource use and reduced individual ownership.

✓ **Reverse Logistics:**

The concept of reverse logistics involves the efficient management of products and materials at the end of their life, including collection, refurbishment, and proper disposal.

✓ **Business Innovation:**

The circular economy encourages businesses to innovate and develop new business models, such as product-as-a-service, that prioritize access and utility over ownership.

Both the green economy and the circular economy recognize the need for a fundamental shift in the way we produce, consume, and interact with the environment. They represent holistic approaches to sustainability that address economic, social, and environmental challenges in an integrated manner.

Green and circular economy practices in the Baltic countries

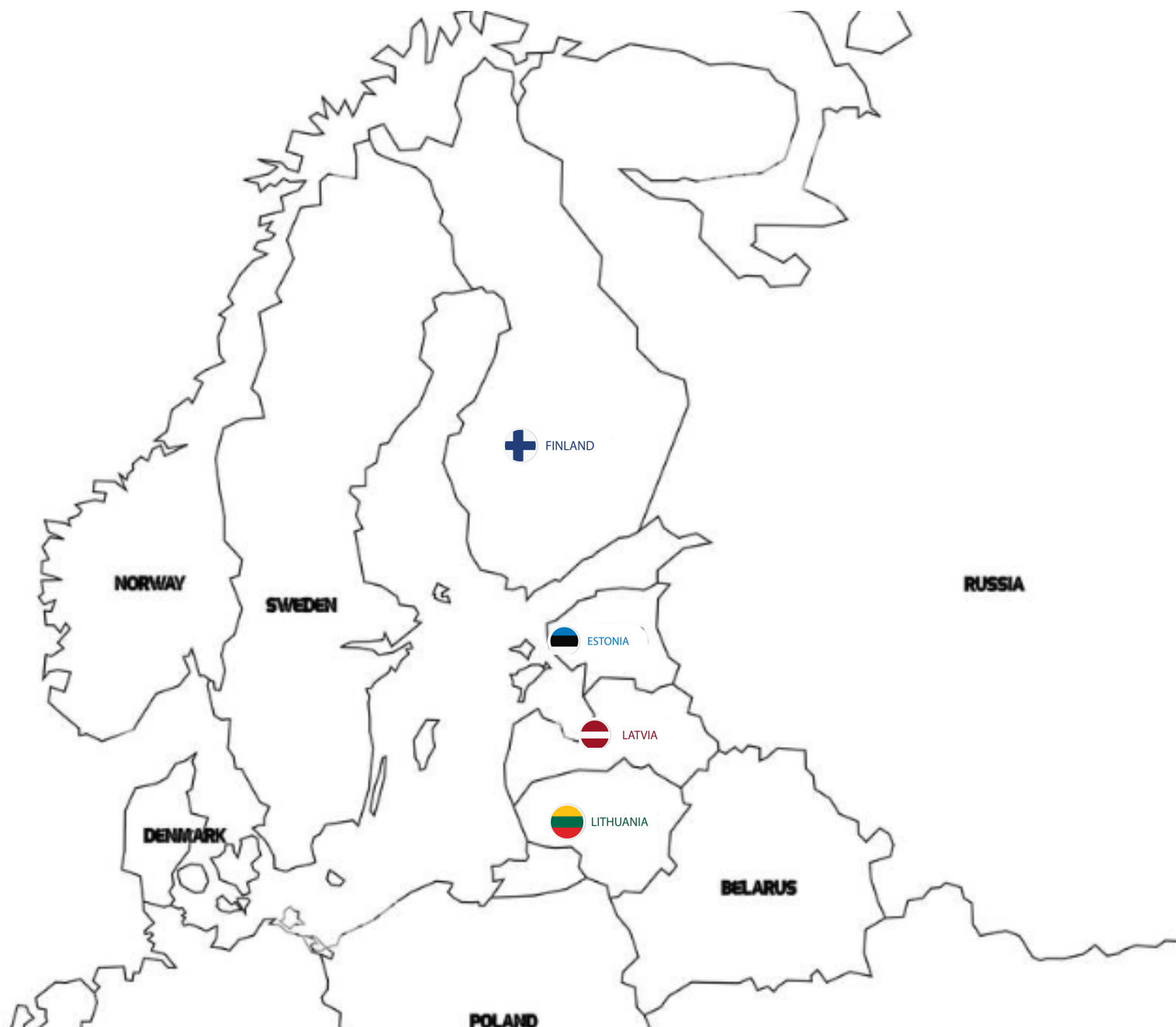
The Baltic countries - **Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania** have embraced the principles of green and circular economy, with initiatives such as waste management and reuse, promotion of green energy, and increased public participation. These initiatives have increased the sustainability of the region, while also providing economic growth and job creation.

One of the major benefits of green and circular economy is the reduction of environmental damage. Through initiatives such as waste management and reuse, the region is able to reduce its environmental impact and move towards a more sustainable future.

Green and circular economy also improves resource efficiency, as resources are reused and recycled, rather than being wasted. This reduces the need for new resources, and helps to reduce the environmental impact of the region.



Brief introduction to Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania



Global environmental performance ranking in 2022

<https://epi.yale.edu/epi-results/2022/component/epi>

	FINLAND	3rd position	76.50 EPI score
	ESTONIA	14th position	61.41 EPI score
	LATVIA	15th position	61.10 EPI score
	LITHUANIA	31st position	55.09 EPI score



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With a population of approximately 5.5 million people, Finland has a reputation for high-quality education, technological innovation, and a high standard of living. The country is known for its strong emphasis on social welfare, equality, and environmental sustainability.



With a population of approximately 1.3 million people, Estonia is known for its digital advancements. Estonia places a strong emphasis on circular economy practices and environmental sustainability as integral components of its development strategy. The country recognizes the importance of responsible resource management, waste reduction, and promoting a green and clean environment.



With a population of approximately 1.9 million people, Latvia places importance on environmental sustainability and nature conservation. The country is home to several national parks and protected areas, reflecting its commitment to preserving its biodiversity and landscapes.



With a population of approximately 2.8 million people, Lithuania is the country is home to national parks and nature reserves, protecting its diverse flora and fauna. Lithuania has also made strides in promoting sustainable practices and environmental conservation.

In the Baltic area, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania shine as examples of sustainability, blending beautiful nature with eco-friendly practices for a greener tomorrow.



Economic and environmental context of the Baltic countries

The Baltic countries – Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are leading the way in transitioning to a circular and green economy. This transition is being driven by the desire to reduce environmental impact, create jobs, and increase the competitiveness of businesses in the region. Through a combination of legislation, investment, and collaboration, these countries are transforming their economies into more sustainable models. Legally, the Baltic countries and Finland are at the forefront of the circular and green economy.

For example, Estonia has implemented a comprehensive circular economy strategy with a focus on waste reduction, reuse, and recycling.

Additionally, all three Baltic countries have joined the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, which works to promote the implementation of circular economy policies.

Finland, meanwhile, has adopted a number of policies to support the introduction of a green economy, including the promotion of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and waste management.

Additionally, Finland has created a number of green economy initiatives, including the Green Growth Program, which promotes sustainable business practices and the circular economy.

Existing policies and initiatives related to sustainable development

The Baltic countries and Finland have also made significant investments in the circular and green economy.

For example, Estonia has invested in a number of initiatives designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase energy efficiency, and promote sustainable land use.

Additionally, the The Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as Finland, have all made ambitious commitments to transitioning to a circular and green economy.

In Finland, the government has set ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase the use of renewable energy, and increase the amount of recycled materials. They have also implemented a number of initiatives to reduce waste and increase resource efficiency.

In Estonia, the government has adopted a Circular Economy Action Plan, aimed at reducing the use of resources, increasing the use of recycled materials, and improving resource efficiency. The plan includes initiatives to increase the reuse of materials, promote the sharing economy, and reduce waste.

In Latvia and Lithuania, the governments have put in place a range of policies and initiatives to promote the transition to a circular and green economy. These include measures to increase the use of renewable energy, reduce waste, and increase the efficiency of resource use.

Overall, the Baltic countries and Finland have made significant strides towards transitioning to a circular and green economy. They have all adopted ambitious targets and implemented policies and initiatives to reduce their environmental impact and promote the efficient use of resources.

Best practices from the Baltic countries - focusing on the interviews

A total of 12 interviews were carried out across Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. For a detailed questionnaire for the interview, please see Annex 2.

A detailed summary of the interviews of the organizations spanning in the sectors including food, transport and logistics, event management, ICT, industrial design, textile, manufacturing, construction, and hospitality is presented below highlighting current and future skill gaps related to green jobs and technologies. And finally the conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

The overview includes the Compendium “Best practices in green and circular economy of Baltic countries”, which may be helpful to find some ideas on circular economy and/or green skills approaches and elements already existing in Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Please refer to Annex 1.



Kamupak (ICT):

The organization offers a circular takeaway packing concept with a digital deposit system. Currently employed by 50 establishments across Finland, including restaurants, cafes, and supermarkets. The packaging is designed for reusability. Users can return the packaging to any participating location and opt for either clean replacements or refunds.

Martela Oyj (industrial design):

The company specializing in modular office furniture design and manufacturing. They engage in product development discussions with employees and customers, focusing on both – products and services. The company embrace the “Workplace as a Service” concept and emphasize the remanufacturing of used office furniture, reflecting their commitment to sustainable practices.

Touchpoint Oy (textile):

The company offer close-loop options where old workwear is collected and repurposed into new materials through mechanical recycling. Their “Workwear as a Service” approach emphasizes functional, durable, and sustainable workwear, focusing on both – material efficiency and extended product lifecycles.



ESTONIA

A le Coq (food):

The company's commitment to sustainability is evident through various initiatives. Package waste is recycled, including broken cans and glass. Fort Aura water bottles utilize 100% recycled PET. Environmentally friendly packaging materials like CO2-neutral plastic and certified cardboard are used. Small juice packages feature paper straws instead of plastic. The company co-founded Eesti Pandipakend, which handles the recycling of deposit-subjected packaging. They partner with NGO Eesti taaskasutusorganisatsioon to ensure packaging is returned to the recycling cycle. Glass is extensively reused, and recycling bins are widespread throughout the building. Flea markets within the company promote reusing personal items. The company runs on 100% green energy, monitoring energy use closely. A biogas station cleans wastewater, while spent grain benefits local farms. Spent yeast from beer is sold to a biomethane station. Long-term computer rentals and electric truck leasing reflect sustainability practices. Bike stops and electric car charging stations encourage greener transportation for employees. The company's upcoming code of conduct emphasizes human rights, following partner companies' lead.

Tartu Smart Bike Share (transport and logistics):

The organization providing cycling for citizens. Bike use during 2017-2018 had been 4,5% and this year growth had been 8%, but it should be even faster.

The European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 (event management):

Tartu is actively pursuing carbon neutrality by 2030, aligning with 100 EU cities sharing this commitment. The city has introduced guidelines for event organizers, which are gaining traction in other Estonian cities. The municipality incorporates green concepts into grant applications and administration. An initiative to reduce waste involves quarterly analysis of leftovers to curtail excess orders. Collaboration with art schools and institutions is planned to repurpose materials for creative projects. Tartu sharing best practices with neighboring municipalities in South Estonia. The city has sourced decorations from companies repurposing waste, highlighting their commitment to sustainability.

The organization is actively engaged in sustainable practices – prioritizing recycling and internal reusability, notably with label collection. Arranging training for both – employees and partners. Forming a focus group that will drive themed months, focusing on educating about water, waste, energy, and transportation. Appointing an environmental coordinator within the office. Hosting 3 seminars to raise awareness about greenwashing.



**LATVIA****Schwenk Latvia (manufacturing):**

The company stands out for its commitment to sustainability and efficiency. They utilize a groundbreaking zero-waste technology, achieving 98% efficiency in using alternative fuels like non-hazardous waste and shredded tires, instead of fossil fuels. This approach not only reduces waste but also utilizes ash byproduct in production. The company also employs an alternative-fuel dryer to optimize resource usage. In terms of distribution, Schwenk Latvia utilizes a mix of rail, sea and land transportation logistics to ensure the most efficient delivery of products to customers.

Within the organization there is a focus on sustainability and employee training. All employees take mandatory "Mission Zero" training, which covers labor protection and sustainability. Environmental and sustainability goal are integrated into each departments annual deliverables, promoting accountability and alignment with company – wide objectives.

Manta North (constructions):

Manta North specializes in sustainable house construction, focusing on energy efficiency and eco-friendly materials. Houses are built to grade A energy efficiency standards and comply with passive house requirements, prioritizing quality, comfort, and energy conservation. Houses are constructed using cross-laminated timber (CLT), a renewable and environmentally friendly material. Each house features an integrated Sun Bird renewable energy system, consisting of solar PV panels and battery pack that stores generated energy, providing up to 7kW of solar power and 6.8 kWh of battery storage. Energy saving features include triple-glazed aluminium windows and smart kinetic switches controlled via an app to minimize energy waste. The use of Kingspan PIR panels ensures durability, high thermal performance, and resistance to fire and smoke. The selection of CLT material results in minimal waste during manufacturing, utilizing 100% of the wood. Thorough treatment of wood surfaces reduces maintenance requirements.





LATVIA

Balticfloc Ltd (paper, pulp, waste recycling):

An organization underwent a gradual evolution of its project idea into waste paper recycling. The company's current mission encompasses a commitment to the concept of a circular economy.

The company had started an initiative aimed towards the general public. Collection of waste, including collection of waste paper is a paid service offered by public utility/waste management companies. Balticfloc set up boxes for paper waste at residential areas and community centres thus providing a free service of collecting waste paper to people. The initiative was designed to promote green behaviors and have educational impact. However, it was not sufficiently popular (apparently not enough people sort waste) and was causing financial losses to the company.





LITHUANIA

Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre (hospitality):

Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre is dedicated to sustainability and responsible travel, aligning with Hilton's global "Travel with Purpose" strategy that encompasses environmental, social, and governance goals. The company aims to reduce emissions intensity in its managed and franchised portfolios significantly by 2030, create learning and career growth opportunities, impact communities positively, and promote responsible conduct throughout its value chain.

The hotel itself embodies sustainability through various practices and technologies. It employs energy-efficient solutions, including solar energy, and complies with sustainable building standards and certifications. A Building Management System ensures intelligent and cost-efficient building operations. The LightStay program, designed to offset environmental impact, tracks resource consumption and carbon footprint, exchanging carbon credits for renewable energy quotas.

In addition to environmental efforts, the hotel prioritizes diversity and inclusivity by employing individuals of various age groups, supporting social projects, and collaborating with disability-related initiatives. Waste reduction initiatives include minimizing paper use, using dispensers instead of plastic bottles, and recycling amenities for donation or repurposing. Furthermore, the hotel actively engages with the community, visiting elderly individuals and partnering with social projects. In summary, Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre exemplifies a commitment to sustainability and social responsibility, positively impacting both the environment and society.

Mano Guru (hospitality, includes catering):

The company minimize plastic usage, opting for paper or bamboo packaging. An emphasis is placed on in-house coffee consumption over takeaways aiming to educate customers about the environmental impact of single-use cups and encourage mindful choices. While takeaways are offered, the café takes the opportunity to raise awareness about sustainability.



**Mantvida (textiles):**

Waste sorting is a key practice, involving separation of materials like paper and textiles in the company. Automatic cutting is employed to minimize fabric waste during the production process. Electric heating is used along with temperature-sensitive sockets, optimizing energy use by automatically turning off heating when desired temperature is reached. Water consumption is targeted for efficiency. Energy usage is monitored by staff - Lights are controlled to be switched off when not needed; LED lighting is implemented for reduced electricity consumption; Upgrading to new equipment contributes to energy savings; Modern machines consume electricity only during operation; Scraps and leftover materials are repurposed when possible, reducing waste. "Mantvida" demonstrates a comprehensive approach to sustainability in their textile operations, focusing on resource optimization and waste reduction throughout their processes.



Current and future skill gaps related to green jobs and technologies

Kamupak (ICT):

✓ Digital skills:

As digital technologies become more integrated into green industries and technologies, there is an increasing demand for workers with skills in data analysis, software development, and other digital skills.

✓ Environmental policy and regulation expertise:

As environmental regulations become more complex, organizations need professionals with expertise in environmental policy and regulation to help them navigate regulatory frameworks and compliance requirements.

Martela Oyj (industrial design):

✓ Digital skills:

As green industries and technologies continue to adopt digital advancements, the need for professionals proficient in data analysis, software development, and similar digital competencies is on the rise.

✓ Circular economy skills:

As more organizations adopt circular economy practices, there is a need for workers with skills in waste management, recycling, and upcycling.

✓ Environmental policy and regulation expertise:

With the growing intricacy of environmental regulations, companies require individuals who possess specialized knowledge in environmental policy and regulation. These experts play a crucial role in guiding organizations through the intricate maze of regulatory frameworks and ensuring compliance with evolving requirements.

✓ Soft skills:

Green jobs and technologies require workers with strong communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, as well as an ability to adapt to new and changing circumstances.

Touchpoint Oy (textile):

✓ Circular economy skills:

As more organizations adopt circular economy practices, there is a need for workers with skills in waste management, recycling, and upcycling.

✓ Environmental policy and regulation expertise:

As environmental regulations become more complex, organizations need professionals with expertise in environmental policy and regulation to help them navigate regulatory frameworks and compliance requirements.

A le Coq (food):

✓ Knowledge about the green field.

Tartu Smart Bike Share (transport and logistics):

✓ General knowledge there is but details are missing.

Methodology is missing how to evaluate long term impact on the environment.

The European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 (event management):

✓ There is a lack of understanding that nature has to be put first.

We should ask if there is another way to communicate our messages without producing more and reuse and recycle as many as possible. Information doesn't circulate as fast as needed.

✓ Soft skills:

Green jobs and technologies require workers with strong communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, as well as an ability to adapt to new and changing circumstances.

Schwenk Latvia (manufacturing):

✓ To raise awareness among staff and people.

Externally, at the government level, there is a lack of unity on this issue and a lack of control (in our situation, we understand much more about our sector than policy makers). There is a Green Deal regulation that everybody follows, but in Latvia as such, there is no single regulation.

Manta North (constructions):

- ✓ Technical skills in the renewable energy field.
“Green” construction skills: architects, engineers, construction workers with knowledge of sustainable materials, “green” building certification and the design of energy-efficient buildings.
Specialists (architects, engineers) who work with new materials.

Balticfloc Ltd (paper, pulp, waste recycling):

- ✓ There is no sufficient infrastructure to support green choices, and similarly – skills.
- ✓ Circular economy skills: As more organizations adopt circular economy practices, there is a need for workers with skills in waste management, recycling, and upcycling.
- ✓ Environmental policy and regulation expertise: As environmental regulations become more complex, organizations need professionals with expertise in environmental policy and regulation to help them navigate regulatory frameworks and compliance requirements.
- ✓ Leadership and management skills: As organizations transition to more sustainable practices, they need leaders and managers with the skills to implement and manage sustainability strategies effectively.

Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre (hospitality):

- ✓ First of all, we need awareness about this question
Personal initiatives are very important - infect others and do it.

Mano Guru (hospitality, includes catering):

- ✓ How to put things together productively. How to organize it in a sensible way that doesn't add extra work for the person.

Mantvida (textiles):

- ✓ There are not the specialist staff that you could bring in to deal with the implementation of the strategy, because textiles is an area that does not generate a very high income, so it is the tailor's shop that could hire those professionals.

Summary of key findings

The summarized information emphasizes the widespread adoption of sustainable practices across various sectors in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Finland.

These organizations demonstrate a shared commitment to environmental responsibility, incorporating a variety of strategies and practices to achieve their sustainability goals and contribute positively to their communities and the planet.

Organizations are actively implementing initiatives that address waste reduction, eco-friendly materials, energy efficiency, and community engagement to contribute positively to both the environment and society.

The main differences among the organizations are:

- ✓ Each industry requires different approaches to sustainability and has unique challenges.
- ✓ Each organization has distinct initiatives and practices that reflect their industry and mission. For example, A le Coq focuses on sustainable packaging, Tartu Smart Bike Share promotes cycling, Kamupak offers circular takeaway packaging, Manta North specializes in sustainable construction, and Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre emphasizes responsible travel.
- ✓ Some organizations heavily integrate technology into their sustainability initiatives, like Kamupak's digital deposit system.

These differences showcase the diverse range of industries, practices, and strategies that organizations employ to integrate sustainability into their operations and contribute positively to the environment and society.

Common themes in environmental responsibility and sustainable practices across the organizations

While these organizations operate in diverse industries and contexts, they share common challenges, goals, and strategies related to environmental responsibility and sustainable practices. The main similarities among these organizations are:

Many organizations across different industries and countries are facing skill gaps related to green jobs and technologies. These gaps indicate a need for individuals with expertise in sustainability, renewable energy, waste management, circular economy, and environmental policy.

Several organizations highlight the importance of raising awareness and educating both staff and the public about environmental issues. This indicates a shared recognition of the need for informed decision-making and behavior change to achieve sustainability goals.

Organizations in various sectors mention challenges related to navigating environmental regulations and policies. This common theme underscores the complexity of regulatory frameworks and the need for professionals who can understand and navigate these regulations effectively.

Many organizations emphasize the adoption of circular economy practices, such as waste management, recycling, and upcycling. This shared focus on circularity reflects a broader trend toward sustainable resource management.

Soft skills such as strong communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and adaptability are highlighted as essential for green jobs and technologies across different industries and roles.

Digital skills are mentioned as important for several organizations. As digital technologies become more integrated into green industries and technologies, workers need skills in data analysis, software development, and other digital areas. Many organizations emphasize the importance of using sustainable materials, technologies, and practices in their respective industries to reduce environmental impact and promote eco-friendliness.

Various organizations engage with their communities to raise awareness about sustainability and environmental issues. This reflects a shared commitment to fostering positive change beyond organizational boundaries.

Conclusions and recommendations

While all organizations acknowledge skill gaps related to green jobs and technologies, the specific skills they require vary. For instance, organizations like Kamupak, Martela Oyj, and Touchpoint Oy highlight the need for digital skills due to the integration of technology, whereas Manta North emphasizes technical skills in renewable energy and green construction.

Organizations in different countries (Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania) navigate varying regulatory and policy landscapes. For example, Schwenk Latvia and Baltic Floc Ltd mention challenges related to regulatory unity and control, while Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre in Lithuania highlights the need for awareness and personal initiatives.

Economic factors play a role in shaping organizational approaches. "Mantvida" in Lithuania notes the challenge of attracting specialist staff due to the relatively low income generated in the textiles sector.

In general, the conclusions highlight the need for a diverse set of skills, including technical, digital, circular economy, and environmental policy knowledge, to address the growing demands of green jobs and technologies. There's also an overarching theme of raising awareness, both among employees and the broader community, and the challenges associated with integrating sustainable practices into various industries.

Annex 1.

Compendium

“Best practices in green and circular economy of Baltic countries”

PARTNERS



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The project’s aim is to promote VET role and leadership in green transition. The project result will be a training program for VET teachers, trainers and managers including innovative teaching and learning approaches for acquiring green skills at VET schools.

This compendium aims to present the best practices including initiatives, persons, organisations and businesses that are already implementing circular economy and/or green skills approaches and elements in the Baltic region countries – Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The project partners performed desktop research to find great examples and conducted interviews with some companies.

This compendium may be helpful to find some ideas on circular economy and/or green skills approaches and elements already existing in Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.



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FINLAND

*best practices implementing circular economy and/or
green skills approaches and elements:*

Vaatelaastari The Vaatelaastari FabPatch is a textile repair product developed by three mothers. It does not need sewing or ironing to be attached. The idea is to extend the usable life of textiles and also reduce the emissions in the textile industry.

<https://vaatelaastari.fi/pages/in-english>

Infinited Fiber Company New textile fiber through chemical recycling: Infinited Fiber's technology allows wasted textiles to be reborn. The technology can use cotton-rich textile waste and other cellulose-based waste streams, such as paper and straw, to create new textile fibre. This enables materials that are already in circulation to be recovered and the amount of generated waste to be reduced. They sell the technology licence for the patented Infinna manufacturing process to fibre producers. In other words, offer fibre manufacturers a way to expand their product portfolio by adding the regenerated Infinna fibre to their product range.

<https://infinitedfiber.com/>

Fiksuruoka.fi Home delivered surplus food. Fiksuruoka.fi offer 1,500 products that are bought from wholesalers and food manufacturers. Typically, the food will be going to waste because its best-before date is approaching, the product has been removed from the product range or the packaging has changed. The customer then places their orders in online and Fiksuruoka home delivers it.

<https://www.fiksuruoka.fi/>

Verso Food (Raisio) Beanit: Plant-based protein products made from fava beans. The goal is to produce food as efficiently as possible with minimal resources. The production of plant-based food is generally very resource-efficient when you look at the food produced in relation to the used area, water and other investments in production. Emissions are relatively low and the process is efficient, as the aim is to grow food that can go directly to people instead of first growing feed for livestock, for instance.

<https://harkis.fi/en/>

Betolar Concrete replacing solutions from industrial side streams. Betolar replaces cement with a low-emission circular economy option: Betolar sees side streams as a new source of raw material to replace virgin materials.

<https://www.betolar.com/home>



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- Remeo** Founded in 1964, Turning construction waste into clean usable raw material. Remeo offers a variety of services in waste management.
<https://remeo.fi/remeo-in-english/>
- Maas Global (Whim App)** Mobile app that combines all modes of transport. MaaS comes from the words “mobility as a service” and means a service in which passengers can seamlessly use all transport services with a single payment. With Whim App, the existing transport resources are used wisely and driving is replaced by other modes of transport, which reduces emissions.
<https://whimapp.com/>
- EcoUp** The circular economy group EcoUp manufactures carbon-neutral thermal insulation and reuses material from demolition (side streams) Circular economy solution launched: 1979, 1998, 2021
<https://ecoup.fi/en/>
- Soilfood** Fertilizers and soil improvers from industrial side streams, turning soil into carbon sinks.
<https://soilfood.fi/etusivu/>
- Ecolan** Restoring nutrients to forests in the form of ash fertilisers. Ecolan processes ash originating from energy production into fertilisers and earth construction materials
- Martela** Founded 1942, Martela designs and manufactures office furniture based on modularity. Also work place and learning environment design services, preowned items, rental and other.
<https://www.yara.co.uk/>
- Kamupak** Kamupak is a circular takeaway packaging solution based on a digital deposit system. At the moment it is used by 50 restaurants, cafes and supermarkets selling takeaway food around Finland. The packaging can be returned to any café, restaurant or supermarket providing KamuDishes. Once returned, the customer can either choose to have new, clean packaging or get a refund.
<https://www.kamupak.com/>
- Touchpoint Oy** Ecological and durable work wear. 1) Close-loop solutions for customers. This means that we collect old and used workwear and give it a new life for the valuable material. Discarded textiles are mechanically recycled and processed into new raw materials for industrial needs. 2) Workwear as a service 3) Functional, durable and sustainable workwear.
<https://www.touchpointww.com/en>

best practices implementing circular economy and/or green skills approaches and elements:



ESTONIA

Foxway Estonia

Local business
IT services and
circular economy

Foxway's circular business model is driving sustainability in all parts of the products' lifecycle. Foxway is focused on providing circular tech services to large organizations, the public sector and the recommerce industry. They recover and remarket tech, and provide the infrastructure necessary to give it a truly sustainable life-cycle that is both cost-efficient and sustainable. They call it Circular Tech.

Over the years Foxway has grown to be the largest recycler of electronic equipment in Northern Europe. About 60,000 broken mobile phones and 15,000 computers arrive there every month, which are repaired and sent to a new circuit around the world.

Their vision is to enable the circular economy of technology. This is their way of positively influencing society.

<https://www.foxway.com/en/>

Uuskasutuskeskus

Local business
Social enterprise

The non-profit organisation Uuskasutus is an independent social enterprise established in 2004 by the Good Deed Foundation, the Estonian Fund for Nature, the Caritas Foundation and two individuals: Rasmus Rask and Priit Mikelsaar. Its objective is to put used things back in circulation and to make re-use and re-design easily accessible and commonplace for everyone in Estonia.

Uuskasutus wants to reach a point where Estonian people consider (at least partial) re-use an obvious choice when they buy and use things. This can be achieved by making re-use easy for ordinary shoppers, and second-hand products must be able to compete with cheap new products in terms of quality.

<https://uuskasutus.ee/en/>

Roosiku Chocolate Factory

Local business
Chocolate factory

Roosiku is a small chocolate factory that is named after the village it was started in. The goal by founding it was to create an environmentally friendly, but also tasty product which there is a lack of on the market. The company is dedicated to producing an ecological raw chocolate that is vegan, and that while still being healthy. The chocolate being raw, means that it has not been heated over 45 degrees Celsius, which ensures that all the beneficial compounds are not destroyed. Likewise, the packaging of the product is almost completely biodegradable.

<https://www.roosiku.ee>



Co-funded by
the European Union

**The European
Capital of Culture
Tartu 2024**

Tartu with Southern Estonia is the European Capital of Culture in 2024. Carrying the European Capital of Culture title is the largest transversal cooperation project between Tartu and Southern Estonian local governments and it is the main cultural event in Estonia in 2024. The concept will be expanded upon by the forthcoming European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 programme, with projects and large events divided between three programme lines: Tartu with Earth, Tartu with Humanity and Tartu with Europe.

The European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 activities are planned to support the growth of Tartu's and the region's international renown; the population's wellbeing and participation in culture; grow entrepreneurship; strengthen the cultural bonds between generations; develop the youths' opportunities for self-fulfilment; cultivate an inspiring and sustainable city space and rural area; support cooperation and international networking.

The European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024, in cooperation with Acento, created an environmental strategy, which aims to place the environmental activities of the European Capital of Culture into the wider global and European context and to identify the most important environmental aspects in Estonia based on the example of Tartu and Southern Estonia.

In order to leave a lasting positive environmental impact, The European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 involved the Tartu City Government's Culture Department and the Environment Department, the Tartu County Development Association and the cultural managers in the City of Tartu in the drafting of the strategy.

Already this summer, the City of Tartu will abide by the *Guidelines for Organising Environmentally Friendly Events* when organising the Car-Free Avenue. This means that the organisers will take into account requirements in seven categories: materials and purchases; catering and the use of water; transportation; energy and resource efficiency; surroundings and community; waste management; and communication.

The European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 strives towards four large goals, which we believe can be reached and we encourage Tartu and Southern Estonian cultural managers to contribute to reaching the goals in cooperation with us:

- By 2025, a cultural management inventory pool has been created in the municipalities of the European Capital of Culture Tartu 2024 region (affordable services), which can be rented and shared with others (decorations, frames for trash cans, dishes and so forth) and which allow to organise public and cultural events without using single-use solutions (in 2022 a clear numerical goal will be confirmed).
- By 2025, environmentally friendly food (organic and local) will be offered and redistributing leftover food from the events has become a norm (in 2022 a clear numerical goal will be confirmed).
- By 2025, separate waste collection has become a norm at events (this means that 90% of events have been organised in a way that waste is collected separately).
- By 2025, more environmentally friendly energy and transportation solutions will be used at events compared to 2022.

<https://tartu2024.ee/en>

Smart Bike Tartu
Local business
Smart Technology

Tartu Smart Bike Share is a public, self-service bike share system for short trips.

Bike Share comprises 750+ bikes and more than 90 stations. Two thirds of the fleet is equipped with electric-assist motors that provide riders with an extra boost when pedalling.

The City of Tartu has collaborated with Bewegen Technologies, Inc. to bring bike share to Tartu.

The Tartu Smart Bike Share project's bicycles and parking areas are financed from the urban development measure of the European Regional Development Fund and the Horizon 2020 programme for European research and innovation (support agreement no. 691883).

Tartu Smart Bike Share has next generation electric-assist bikes, which can communicate with the bike share system in real-time. This gives us information about the bike's location and if there is a problem, we can react quickly. Software installed in the bikes collects statistical data on your rides, speed, distances, etc. The Bike Share System is easily scalable and adaptable according to actual needs.

Smart Bikes are an important part of the Smart City way of thinking. One of the most important objectives of Tartu City is to develop environmentally friendly mobility. With Bike Share, we can reduce the number of cars, encourage users to get some physical activity and maintain the "15 minutes to anywhere" phenomena in Tartu. In addition to the databased and smartly planned bike network, using a Smart Bike is a lifestyle choice valued by citizens and visitors. Using a Smart Bike means being smart and conscious of your choices in the Tartu way.

<https://ratas.tartu.ee/#>

Foodsharing Tartu
Local business

Movement that saves and distributes leftover food in Tartu, cooperating with individuals, retailers, companies and food producers

Foodsharing Tartu comes from the word Foodsharing. Through Foodsharing, individuals, traders and producers can offer or collect food that would otherwise be thrown away. Foodsharing rescues and distributes leftover food, fighting against food waste. Foodsharing gives rescued food the opportunity to find its way to people who want it, instead of the food ending up in the trash. Tartu Foodsharing aims to reduce the amount of food wasted and broaden the worldview of its fellow citizens. Foodsharing Tartu is not a charity!

Foodsharing Tartu functions only thanks to the volunteers and people who donate resources necessary to keep it running smoothly and creating/maintaining foodsharing points.

Foodsharing Tartu helps distribute leftover food, creates and maintains foodsharing points, shares information on social media and at schools and they are constantly looking for new partners.

<https://www.foodsharing.ee/eng.html>

Looming Hostel Looming hostel aims to minimize our operations impact on the environment. They hold in high regard our commitment to reusing, recycling, renovating and reducing our ecological footprint.

Local business

They implement the following environmental principles:

- Hospitality
- Most of our furniture is from second hand shops, reused or made from recycled materials
 - We use resources effectively and economically
 - We prefer natural and environmentally friendly materials
 - All cleansers we use have eco or nature-friendly label or we use vinegar solution
 - We produce as little trash as we can. We sort the generated waste into household waste, packaging, paper and cardboard, bottles and biowaste
 - Breakfast at the hostel is vegetarian
 - We train our employees to be environmentally conscious and let them apply their knowledge on a daily basis
 - We also encourage our guests to act responsibly towards the environment and share their knowledge with us and other guests.

<https://est.loominghostel.ee/>

A. Le Coq A. Le Coq is the oldest and biggest drinks manufacturer in Estonia. Our product portfolio includes 14 different product groups. They only use renewable energy and have created a solar farm for the logistics centre. They direct the energy from the flue gases of the boiler plant into heating the production buildings.

Local business

Beverage industry

The main goals in sustainability of A. Le Coq are:

- Build a unique biogas plant by 2022
- Be the first to only use water bottles made of fully recycled plastic
- Replace multipack film with cardboard or CO2 neutral plastic
- Increase the proportion of reusable bottles and packaging
- Ensure a full transition to paper drinking straws
- Responsibility for cleaner water
- Promote the circular economy
- Release packaging back into circulation

<https://www.alecoq.ee/>



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Iglucraft

Local business
Building cabins and
saunas

First, there was the human urge to think... To think about oneself, about life, about the world or whatever comes to mind. But for thinking, time and space is required; a space where your mind is isolated from the disturbances of the daily flow of information, so that new thoughts can emerge and grow. One day, this emotional need to think got so strong that it physically materialized. It came to this world as a Single Iglusauna. It was like an isolated incubator, where time was rather of a philosophical than a rational matter - a place where one could TAKE TIME to grow awareness and wisdom by thinking. Since the birth of the first Iglu product, the company has learned that the idea of TAKING TIME consists of three sequential steps:

- Change the physical environment
- Create your own space for thinking
- Enjoy the flow of wisdom

Today Iglucraft is making handcrafted cabins and saunas with the highest quality. Each of their products is handcrafted - shingle by shingle. The natural materials and curved organic form blends into the countryside, the beachfront as well as the forest.

The reason why Igluhut's structures incorporate roundness, reflecting nature's true harmony - to help people to a more natural way of being than the everyday life in perfectly linear cityscapes. Iglucrafts products transform the environment, helping people step out of the daily routine and to take time for themselves.

The company's vision is that we all should follow the paths of nature more; how it is forever changing, evolving and adapting. With a world that is becoming more and more regulated and structured for efficiency and practicality, people need a place to get in touch with the natural order of things.

<https://iglucraft.com/en>

Ecoprint AS

Printing Business
Printing

Ecoprint is an Estonian-owned environmentally conscious company that specializes in producing cardboard and corrugated packaging. Established in 2007, the company's primary focus is to provide sustainable packaging solutions that have a minimal impact on the environment. Ecoprint also offers printing services for books, magazines, and various advertising materials.

Ecoprint is one of the few printing service providers that boasts a highly experienced and diverse team. The close collaboration between Ecoprint's creative team, top printing industry specialists, and project managers guarantees clients high-quality printing solutions and excellent customer service. The company's commitment to using eco-friendly materials and processes ensures that their products are not only of the highest quality but also environmentally sustainable.

With its state-of-the-art equipment and skilled staff, Ecoprint provides clients with a range of printing and packaging solutions that meet their unique needs while taking care of the planet. Whether it's printing books or creating custom packaging, Ecoprint strives to make a positive impact on the environment without compromising on quality.

<https://ecoprint.ee/>

best practices implementing circular economy and/or green skills approaches and elements:



LATVIA

Students climate initiative in Latvia - Hackathon Young Innovators 2022: «Young Climathon»

“Young Climathon” is organized for the second time to promote students’ understanding of climate change and environmental challenges, as well as to increase the creation of sustainable services, products and initiatives. The timing of the hackathon coincided with the UN Climate Change Conference, where national leaders were trying to agree on how to accelerate the fight against climate change. In the hackathon, Latvian students from schools looked for ways to get people to switch from private cars to more environmentally friendly means of transportation, increasing society’s responsibility for climate change and helping cities become more environmentally friendly. They also thought about how to educate young people about green energy through interactive exhibits in museums, science centres and exhibitions. The challenges were defined by JSC Latvenergo, Municipality of Riga and Liepāja.

Ist place: Draudzīgā aicinājuma Liepājas pilsētas 5. vidusskolas team came up with an idea of a mobile application that provides users with information about food leftovers in nearby establishments that would help save resources used for food preparation, provide a meal to residents who have difficulty taking care of it themselves, and reduce food waste.

IInd - the team of Andrejas Upīša Skrīveru Secondary School encouraged the creation of a bicycle shed with a green roof, which, placed near the school, would encourage more active use of bicycles among students and teachers. This team also received the European Union House Special Award and the Audience Award.

IIIrd - Babīte High School team looked at renewable energy and the ways it could be promoted - a specially equipped mobile room, where it would be possible to learn about energy types and the way to electricity through practical activities and various interactive tasks.

<https://www.visc.gov.lv/lv/jaunums/skolenu-klimata-hakatona-uzvar-ideja-par-lietotni-partikas-ilgtspejigakai-izmantosanaipiedava-ari-citas-idejas-klimata-parmainu-mazinasanaip>

“Pavasara mēbeles” /

Spring furniture

Local business

Furniture restoration

The brand “Pavasara Mēbeles” was born in 2018, it was founded by Alice Ābele.

They not only restore a “sad” piece of furniture and give it a second lease on life but also furnish the interior with very special pearls. Alice and her team go pearl hunting every day and accept furniture others don’t need. The team not only repairs with their love, but also restores the furniture so that it becomes completely unique and unseen, and nature becomes a little less polluted.

Involuntarily, the project that started lazily has grown into one of the unique companies in Latvia and has started the “greener thinking and recycling” or upcycle movement in Latvia. “Pavasara Mēbeles” has been recognized as one of the 10 best circular economy companies in Europe. Ambitious, they continue to innovate, educate and simplify furniture restoration so that it is as simple, high-quality and affordable as possible.

During its short and powerful existence, “Pavasara Mēbeles” has not only restored thousands of pieces of furniture but also created various educational programs to teach people how important and essential it is to engage in furniture restoration and other forms of recycling, creating something new and beautiful from the seemingly for obsolete products. By breaking stereotypes, we are able to teach anyone how to restore a piece of furniture and we recommend passing on this knowledge to friends, families and acquaintances.

<http://www.pavasaramebeles.lv/>

Brīvkode - Exchange and meeting place

Local project

Charity shop

You painted the walls and you don’t want to look at the colours for a while? Brīvkode - “free booth” is a place to leave your brushes to be picked up free of charge by someone who has scheduled a repair. And not only brushes, but also toys, clothes and other things that are not useful for oneself, but can be used by someone else.

Everyone is invited to leave good, high-quality things, in exchange of choosing something they like and find useful for free. Brīvkode is a non-commercial, non-profit initiative that has been operating on the principle of goodwill under the umbrella of the FREE RIGA association since 2018.

<https://brivkode.lv/>

WinGo

Local startup

IT and waste
management

WinGo Deposit develops different types of equipment that, with the help of artificial intelligence technology, accept, recognize and sort various types of both flattened and non-flattened packages, metal cans, tetrapacks, PET and glass bottles. The system is able to recognize even packages that no longer have a readable barcode. A recent innovation is the development stage of a device designed to accept electronic cigarettes and batteries. An IoT, an Android application designed for digital authentication of the sorter and reward for his activity has been developed for the motivation of the residents.

<https://www.wingo.lv/#/>

co2capture.fund

Local startup

Information

Technology

co2capture.fund is a blockchain-powered community funding platform for forest acquisition, decentralization, tokenization & carbon capture.

The vision of the climate technology startup co2capture.fund is to change the way forests are commercialized. The startup is creating a blockchain platform for the acquisition of forests, where they are decentralized: broken down into smaller units and linked to virtual assets. Anyone can buy a very small or larger share of a forest by purchasing these virtual assets. Owners do not participate in forest management but can benefit financially from the carbon dioxide (CO₂) sequestered in the forest.

“Our fundamental goal is for the token holder to own a living asset with coverage in the physical world that continues to add value in the long term. We hope that over time people will want to buy these tokens not only to make a profit but also to balance their carbon footprint,” says Viktorija Martinsone, co-founder of co2capture.fund. In blockchain projects, virtual assets are called tokens. In this case, they can be likened to forest undivided shares, which, like shares, entitle their holders to a return over a certain period of time.

In such a system, a person becomes a co-owner of a forest that he does not have to take care of himself. This mitigates potential risks in terms of expenditure and income. Each undivided share does not relate to a specific patch of land: the fund owns several forests, and each individual owner owns a share of the whole. “If one of the forests underperforms, the owner is less affected than if he owned that particular physical forest,” explains Viktorija.

<https://co2capture.fund/>

<https://labsoflatvia.com/en/inspirational-stories/commercialising-forest-carbon-sequestration>

Seaweed Packaging

Local startup

Packaging material

production

The idea of “Seaweed Packaging” is the development of packaging material. Seaweed biomass, primarily obtained from Baltic Sea algae, is used in its creation.

This material is intended to be film-like and flexible, soluble at elevated temperatures, and compostable as well as biodegradable. “The first purpose of the application of the material is the packaging of body care products, reducing the use of fossil-based plastic packaging in the cosmetics industry,” says Kitija Paula Melnbarde, the author and developer of the “Seaweed Packaging” idea.

Seaweed is one of the world’s least-valued biomass resources. But it grows ten times faster than land plants. It does not need soil, drinking water, pesticides and other chemicals.

<https://seaweedpackaging.com/https://labsoflatvia.com/iedvesmas-stasti/iepakojuums-no-algem>



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Skrundas muižaLocal business
hospitality

Supporting regional producers. Skrunda manor is a popular place for weddings and various other celebrations, which can also be proud of attracting modern and green-minded chefs in the creation of the restaurant's menu, focusing on local, natural and biologically grown products. Skrunda Manor can also be proud of the Green Key status.

"When renovating the manor, we immediately thought about maximum energy efficiency, without even planning to be certified as an eco-hotel. The main thing was to use resources as efficiently as possible, not to spend unnecessarily and to use the opportunities given by nature to one's advantage. We also thought about accessibility, for example for people with special needs. When we found out about the Green Key eco-certificate, we had already fulfilled most of the criteria ourselves," says Edgars Vizulis, chairman of the Skrunda manor board. The hotel not only fulfils all the requirements of the certificate, including sorting waste, but compost is also installed here, and part of the food waste goes to local livestock farmers.

"We have only had the garden for a couple of years. We grow plants there that do not require a lot of care and a large area - mainly various greens, herbs, tomatoes, zucchini and pumpkins, and of course, seasonal berries, apples, pears, and rhubarb. It is planned to increase the range of plants every year," reveals Vizulis. The Skrunda manor restaurant tries to buy food from farmers who farm in the nearby area, thereby reducing the costs and environmental impact caused by transportation, also less packaging is needed, and in addition, in this way, local producers are supported - the trout come from neighbouring fish ponds, nearby an ostrich farm, but in the late summer and autumn season, the manor's apple orchard spoils with its harvest. Therefore, the menu also emphasizes Latvian flavours.

"The main thing is to keep track of how efficiently we use the available resources and what we can improve because development is a constant work. For example, a restaurant has uneven occupancy depending on the season, day and even time of day. When there is a low load, the workers know to turn off the ventilation, and the large hoods. When there are few customers in the restaurant, we do not cook on the large stoves, which are powerful and consume a lot of electricity. Instead, we use small induction cookers. The most important thing is the training of employees, because not only technology helps to save money, but also the human factor, understanding. You have to learn all the time", Edgars Vizulis is convinced. "Yes, today tourism is an industry that has a very big impact on the environment. But there is also a choice here - you can go hiking with tents and spend minimal resources and enjoy comfort, for which it is also possible to find environmentally friendly alternatives. You need to travel because only seeing the world, and getting to know cultures, gives you inspiration and the desire to implement good examples in your everyday life. Travelling is an experience that cannot be replaced by staring at a computer screen or even a book. And it's great that nowadays it has become so democratic and accessible," emphasizes Vizulis.

<https://www.skrundasmuiza.lv/>

<https://www.santa.lv/raksts/ieva/celojam-zali-jeb-kas-ir-videi-saudziga-naktsmitne-18783/>

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**Business Sustainability
Council**
Business initiative

Business Sustainability Council was established by Latvian companies to exchange knowledge, deepen their understanding of sustainability and jointly create a more sustainable business environment in Latvia.

The initiative of starting the Business Sustainability Council came from Swedbank, and the following companies joined the invitation: Latvijas Finieris, Latvijas Dzelzceļš, LMT, Medical society ARS, Madara Cosmetics, Valmiermuiža, Dobeles dzirnavnieks, Latvian grain growers' cooperative VAKS and peat extraction and processing company Laflora have joined the Business Sustainability Council.

The members of the Business Sustainability Council are united by their support for global 2050 climate neutrality efforts, the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, and the desire to promote the creation of sustainable business culture in Latvia.

During the first meeting, the members of the Business Sustainability Council signed a joint commitment to move step by step towards sustainability. It includes a commitment to set clear sustainability goals and courses of action within their companies. For example, accelerating the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, investing in the circular economy, energy efficiency and other environmental and climate protection measures, and investing resources to understand and assess the full environmental and climate impacts of our products or services, and reporting on our progress in preventing climate change and mitigating environmental impacts by regularly reviewing your goals while avoiding green deception.

<https://biznesam.swedbank.lv/ilgtspeja/ilgtspeja-prakse/biznesa-ilgtspejas-padome-53152>

**Natural thermal
packaging material
from Riga Technical
University**
Invention

Topics addressed:
climate and
environmental
challenges

In order to replace polystyrene, which is harmful to nature, scientists from the Institute of Environmental Protection and Heat Systems of Riga Technical University have created a natural thermal packaging material.

It could be used for transporting goods - the material protects against temperature fluctuations and mechanical damage.

"Polystyrene, which is a very common material for making various packaging, is obtained from fossil resources. Its biggest problem is that when you finally use it, it doesn't stop existing. It is difficult to recycle, once in nature, it quickly breaks down into microplastics, causing great damage to the environment," explains Ilze Vamža, a researcher at the Environmental Protection and Thermal Systems Institute (VASSI) of the RTU Faculty of Electrical and Environmental Engineering.

In the intellectual property auction held by RTU, the license for VASSI's invention and technology use has already been purchased by the companies SIA "Forma" and SIA "ZARO".

MANTA NORTH

Local business
House building for
sustainable housing

The initiative joined architects, engineers and sociologists in discussion. Think of the main problems people face at the moment and how the near future will unfold. It's a guess, but so far the most valid guess we've ever had.

Manta is a way of life. All things considered, the natural processes within ourselves and our environment shape who we are and vice versa. With Manta North, we maximize the potential of using natural energy resources for daily life. The next couple of years will be critical in defining how we are going to live on this planet in terms of taking responsibility for our actions. The solutions that we have brought to life are nothing unique, but they are the best that we can put together, for now. We are sure it's not even the beginning.



Schwenk Latvia

Manufacturing

Schwenk Latvia is one of the most innovative building materials producers in Europe and a leader in sustainable business practice. The company produces high quality cement, concrete and aggregates for a broad range of customers, while minimizing its environmental impact and reducing its CO2 emissions. Schwenk Latvia operates a modern cement plant in Brocēni that uses 85% alternative fuel from specially treated and prepared household and industrial waste, chipped tyres and neutralized polluted soil. The plant also recycles the ashes from the fuel burning process into clinker, the main ingredient of cement. Schwenk Latvia supports circular economy principles and responsibly cares for treatment of manufacturing waste. The company does not produce waste water and waste during the manufacturing process in the plant, as the manufacturing cycle is fully closed. Schwenk Latvia strives to be the leading example of sustainable manufacturing in the construction industry.

<https://schwenk.lv/en/>

Balticfloc Ltd

Waste paper recycling

Balticfloc Ltd is a company that produces thermal insulation materials and cellulose fibre from recycled waste paper. The company aims to promote the circular economy model, which reduces the consumption of natural resources and the environmental impact of waste. Balticfloc Ltd participates in various research projects and cooperates with international partners to develop innovative and eco-friendly products. The company offers a range of products for different purposes, such as preventing environmental pollution, hydroseeding, road construction and pet bedding. Balticfloc Ltd is committed to adapting its entrepreneurship to a green future while strengthening its competitiveness.

<https://www.balticfloc.lv/en/products/>

best practices implementing circular economy and/or green skills approaches and elements:



LITHUANIA

Vinted Online marketplace

Vinted is a platform that allows people to sell and buy second-hand clothes and accessories online. It was founded in 2008 by Milda Mitkute and Justas Janauskas, two friends who wanted to declutter their wardrobes and make some extra money. Since then, Vinted has grown to become one of the largest online marketplaces for pre-loved fashion, with over 45 million members in 13 countries.

In 2019, Vinted became Lithuania's first tech unicorn.

Vinted's mission is to make second-hand fashion the first choice for everyone. By offering a convenient and easy way to sell and buy clothes, Vinted helps people save money, reduce waste, and express their personal style. Vinted also fosters a community of like-minded people who share their passion for fashion and sustainability.

Vinted's story is an example of how a simple idea can turn into a successful business that creates a positive impact for the planet and society. Vinted is not only a platform, but also a movement that inspires people to rethink their consumption habits and join the circular economy.

<https://company.vinted.com/sustainability>

<https://www.vinted.com/>

DAMU Giving second chances to create one-off garments

Gabrielė Damulytė, [VESK](#) graduate, designs one-off garments for women, and looks for materials in second-hand clothing shops. The oversize women's shirts, which can be called her calling card, are made from several quality men's shirts, with the collar and cuffs being the most important.

Gabrielė had graduated in design and tailoring and suddenly got stuck on the idea of a re sew of clothes.

The idea appealed to her because she had always loved going to second-hand clothes shops - for the sustainability, the fun and the quality of the clothes. She would buy something and then try it on to suit herself.

Gabrielė created her first oversized shirt with her signature ruffles by combining images she saw online with her imagination. All of them are one-offs, made from colour-coordinated men's shirts. Her designs are based on sustainability. That is why she herself is more style-oriented, because style is timeless and has no seasons.

<https://www.facebook.com/Damu0504>

<https://www.diena.lt/naujienos/vilnius/miesto-pulsas/vilniete-dirba-savo-svajoniui-darba-suteikdama-drabuziams-antra-sansa-kuria-vienetinius-drabuzius-1121383>



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TEXTALE
#NewWear Fashion
Platform

TEXTALE is a fashion resale and exchange platform that invites you to buy, sell or donate non-wearable but stylish and high-quality clothing, accessories, footwear and home textiles.

TEXTALE's garments are carefully selected, repaired, refurbished and even improved where necessary. You wouldn't even know they're not new if you looked at them - they're completely #NewWear.

The #NewWear fashion sold here is stylish! While we often think of second-hand clothes as unfashionable, TEXTALE shatters this myth by offering a wide range of second-hand fashion gems. Often, TEXTALE stores receive items with labels, clothes that have only been worn once.

The TEXTALE Centre is home to a wide range of recycled design projects and educational activities.

The organisation focuses on textile and clothing recycling and sustainability initiatives. They collect clothing, footwear, and accessories in special collection boxes at shopping centers. These items are sorted based on various factors like condition, quality, style trends, seasonality, brand, fabric composition, and recyclability. They offer resale services for these items, either selling them or donating them to charity.

Additionally, they assist businesses, designers, and makers by preparing garments and textiles for use or resale. They also engage in secondary design work.

The organization is involved in non-remunerated activities such as distributing donated items to social organizations and involving socially vulnerable groups in various textile-related tasks, helping them acquire new skills. Furthermore, they have an educational role, promoting sustainable lifestyles and styles while participating in projects to develop the circular textile economy in Lithuania and abroad.

<https://textale.lt/apie-mus/#footer>

<https://www.facebook.com/textale.lt/>

Paulig Lietuva
Coffee roasting and
distribution

"Paulig Lietuva" is a company that specializes in coffee roasting and distribution in Lithuania. "Paulig Lietuva" is part of the international food and beverage Paulig Group. The company has been encouraging consumers to choose solutions that are more sustainable, but not inferior in terms of taste and convenience. "Paulig Lietuva" is committed to sustainability and quality, sourcing its coffee from certified farms and roasting it with care and expertise. The company's climate change objectives have been endorsed by the Science Based Targets initiative. The company seeks to achieve more ambitious goals and show that it is possible to implement a business model in line with this guideline, development of a more favourable environment for sustainable business in Lithuania.

The company also supports social and environmental projects in the coffee-growing regions, such as improving education, health, and infrastructure.

<https://www.paulig.lt/lt>

https://www.pauliggroup.com/sites/default/files/2023-03/Paulig%20Annual%20Report%202022_1.pdf

UAB “Paliūtis”

Local business
Manufacture

UAB “Paliūtis” main activity is the manufacture of waterproof footwear (also known as rubber footwear, rubber boots, shoes) and PVC irrigation hoses, as well as polymeric plastics according to customer requirements. EU approved raw materials for production - mixtures are free of lead, cadmium and nitrogen compounds are used for this production.

The rubber boots themselves can be considered quite sustainable, simply because of their durability and longevity. But the “Paliūtis” collection of experiments is full of attempts to make footwear even more interesting: from recycled plastic window frames to coffee grounds that smell like a brisk morning. Some of the experiments, such as the aforementioned shoes made from coffee grounds, have not yet been mass-produced, and are still waiting for their customers. However, a special line of PVC shoes containing 60% certified recycled material has already attracted a lot of interest. Today, such shoes account for 10-15% of the company’s production.

UAB “Paliūtis” sustainability initiatives include reusable pallets, cardboard baling and sorting of all waste. The invitation to Lithuanian buyers to bring or send their outgrown, torn and unusable rubber shoes, which the company recycles, is also gaining attention. The “Don’t Throw It Away, Bring It Back for Recycling” initiative is aimed at recovering, first and foremost, shoes that are no longer in use and that have been manufactured by “Paliūtis” itself. This ensures that footwear of unclear composition, which may have been produced with harmful or prohibited impurities, does not end up in the recycling stream.

<https://co2capture.fund/>

PakMarkas

Local startup
Packaging material
production

The idea of “Seaweed Packaging” is the development of packaging material. Seaweed biomass, primarily obtained from Baltic Sea algae, is used in its creation.

This material is intended to be film-like and flexible, soluble at elevated temperatures, and compostable as well as biodegradable. “The first purpose of the application of the material is the packaging of body care products, reducing the use of fossil-based plastic packaging in the cosmetics industry,” says Kitija Paula Melnbarde, the author and developer of the “Seaweed Packaging” idea.

Seaweed is one of the world’s least-valued biomass resources. But it grows ten times faster than land plants. It does not need soil, drinking water, pesticides and other chemicals.

PacMarkas is a company that specializes in creating immersive and interactive stories for various platforms. They use advanced technology and artificial intelligence to craft engaging narratives that adapt to the choices and preferences of the users. PacMarkas has been in the industry for over a decade and has produced several award-winning titles, such as The Last Guardian, The Witcher 3, and Cyberpunk 2077. PacMarkas is currently working on a new project, codenamed Project Z, which promises to be their most ambitious and innovative story yet.

<https://www.pakmarkas.lt/apie-mus/tvarus-vystymasis/>

VšĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika"

VšĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika" was established to help promote zero-waste production and lifestyles in Lithuania and to promote the principles of the circular economy among business and government. VšĮ "Žiedinė ekonomika" works actively with municipalities and the Ministry of the Environment to share its knowledge and the experience of the European environmental NGO networks Zero Waste Europe and the European Environmental Bureau. They also work with a wide range of businesses to help them move towards a circular economy business model.

Their initiatives include Stotelė DĖK'ui helping people from disadvantaged groups to learn new skills, volunteer and find jobs.

<https://www.circulareconomy.lt/>

<https://www.stoteledekui.lt/>

<https://vilnius.lt/lt/2022/01/17/zirmunuose-atidaroma-dalijimosi-daiktais-stotele-dekui/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/stoteledekui>

BIOK LAB Local business Cosmetics manufacturing company

BIOK LAB is the largest Lithuanian cosmetics manufacturing company, managing the brands MARGARITA, ECODENTA and KILIG. Naturalness and innovation are the fundamental basis of their activities, combining the expertise of professionals in biology, chemistry, dentistry, dermatology and cosmetics. Healthy, natural and effective skin, hair and dental care for the body is the core commitment to people. BIOK LAB always set high standards for environmental and natural friendliness in our activities, by strictly sorting all waste, choosing reliable, socially responsible suppliers of raw materials, and prioritising recyclable packaging materials. A responsible approach to the use of natural resources and to our relationship with the environment, consumers and employees are among our company's key objectives and commitments.

<https://www.bioklab.lt/apie-mus/>

AugaGroup Organic food company

AugaGroup is Europe's largest vertically integrated organic food company. The group develops a sustainable agricultural model based on new technologies on organically certified land, including crop, livestock, poultry and mushroom farming. Using its own and outsourced production capacities, the company produces a wide range of organic products for end-users from its own raw materials and supplies raw products to the market.

AUGA group develops emission-reducing agricultural technologies, applies a sustainable farming model and offers more sustainable organic products to consumers and raw materials to processors. AUGA group's goal is to create a new category of more sustainable food with "no cost to nature".

In order to produce more sustainable raw materials, AUGA group is developing biomethane infrastructure, hybrid tractors, other agricultural machinery and methane-reducing specialised feed technology for cattle and applying regenerative crop rotation. Innovative technology-based agricultural activities include crop, livestock and mushroom growing.

https://auga.lt/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Auga-Group-2022_LT-1.pdf

Mantvida Garment sewing	Mantvida is a garment sewing company based in Lithuania that specializes in producing high-quality clothing with minimal environmental impact. The company follows the principles of green and circular economy, which means that it uses renewable energy sources, reduces waste and emissions, and recycles or reuses materials whenever possible. Mantvida aims to create durable and stylish garments that can be worn for a long time, repaired if needed, or returned to the company for upcycling. By doing so, Mantvida contributes to the preservation of natural resources and the promotion of social responsibility. https://mantvida.lt/
Mano Guru Social enterprise Catering	Mano Guru is a social enterprise in Lithuania that provides healthy food and catering services, as well as training and employment opportunities for people recovering from drug addiction. Mano Guru is also committed to the principles of green and circular economy, by reducing food waste, using biodegradable packaging, sourcing local and organic ingredients, and promoting environmental awareness among its customers and staff. Mano Guru is one of the examples of how Lithuania is advancing circularity at a national level, with the support of various policies and initiatives that go beyond EU regulations. Mano Guru contributes to the country's potential to become a centre of green sustainable finance in Northern Europe. https://www.manoguru.lt/
Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre Hospitality	Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre is a contemporary hotel located on Gedimino Avenue, the main street of Vilnius. The hotel is within walking distance of many cultural and historical attractions, such as the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights, the National Art Gallery, and the Vilnius Old Town. The hotel offers comfortable rooms with free WiFi, a restaurant with a terrace and bar, a fitness center, and a business center. The hotel also has a focus on green and circular economy, as it features on-site electric vehicle charging stations, energy-efficient lighting and appliances, and recycling programs. Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre is an ideal choice for travelers who want to enjoy the city's vibrant atmosphere while staying in a sustainable and modern hotel. Hilton Garden Inn Vilnius City Centre is deeply committed to sustainability and responsible travel, aligning with Hiltons global "Travel with Purpose" environmental, social and governance strategy. The company have Environmental and social goals: ●Cut managed portfolio emissions intensity by 75% and franchised portfolio emissions intensity by 56% by 2030. ●Create 5 million learning and career growth opportunities for Team Members and communities with a focus on underrepresented groups by 2030. ●Meaningfully impact 20 million community members by 2030. ●Promote responsible, inclusive conduct across 100% of our value chain operations. https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/vnogigi-hilton-garden-inn-vilnius-city-centre/?SEO_id=GMB-EMEA-GI-VNOGIGI



Annex 2. Interview questionnaire

For the interviewer - the questions are supplemented with possible examples that could facilitate the interview process. However, it is not necessary to use all of them, depending on the sector or the company's experience in green practices.

Baltic partners from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland are implementing Erasmus+ project “Baltic Green Leadership: VET Students as Agents of Change / Green Leadership”. The project’s aim is to promote VET role and leadership in green transition. The project result will be a training program for VET teachers, trainers and managers including innovative teaching and learning approaches for acquiring green skills at VET schools.

The project partners carry out interviews with companies in different sectors in their countries in order to develop a list of green and circular skills and collect essential information that is necessary to create the training programme.

This interview will add important value to the final results of the project and your opinion and insights are therefore highly appreciated. The answers will help us assess green skills needs and develop a comprehensive strategy for creating the training programme.

Country _____

Name of the company (not mandatory) _____

Represented sector

ICT	
Hospitality (includes catering)	
Textile	
Construction	
Transport and logistics	
Woodworking (carpentry, joinery)	
Agriculture	
Other (please name)	

Green skills are essential for the transition to a sustainable economy. They promote environmental sustainability, improve economic performance, address social equity, foster innovation, and help address global challenges. Investing in green skills training and education is therefore critical to promoting the transition to a sustainable future.

1. Why have you (your company) decided to follow a “green” strategy? What is your story?

- minimize harm to the environment;
- contribute to a more sustainable future;
- increased social responsibility;
- cost savings;
- improved reputation;
- etc.



2. What is your understanding of green skills and their importance for the transition to a sustainable economy?

This may include (sectoral differences):

- Renewable energy: Understanding how to design, install, operate and maintain renewable energy systems such as solar, wind, hydro and geothermal.
- Energy efficiency: The ability to optimize energy usage, reduce waste, and improve energy performance in buildings, industries, and transportation systems.
- Sustainable agriculture: The knowledge of sustainable farming practices, including crop rotation, soil conservation, natural pest control, and water management.
- Waste management: The ability to identify, sort and manage waste streams, including composting, recycling and reducing the use of non-renewable materials.
- Water conservation: Understanding how to conserve water resources, manage water quality and reduce water pollution.
- Environmental policy: Understanding environmental policies and regulations and how to implement and enforce them effectively.
- Green building: The knowledge of sustainable building practices, including design, materials, construction, and maintenance.
- Environmental science: Understanding of the science behind environmental challenges and solutions, including climate change, pollution, and natural resource management.
- Circular economy: Understanding how to minimize waste and maximize resource use through circular economy practices.
- Sustainable transportation: The knowledge of sustainable transportation options, such as public transportation, electric vehicles, and bike sharing programs.

3. What are the current and future skill gaps and shortages in your organization / industry related to green jobs and technologies?

Examples may include (sectoral differences):

- Technical skills for renewable energy: There is currently a shortage of technicians and engineers with technical skills for designing, installing, operating, and maintaining renewable energy systems such as solar, wind, and geothermal.
- Digital skills: As digital technologies become more integrated into green industries and technologies, there is an increasing demand for workers with skills in data analysis, software development, and other digital skills.
- Green building skills: There is a growing demand for skilled workers in green building and sustainable construction, including architects, engineers, and construction workers with expertise in sustainable materials, green building certifications, and energy-efficient building design.
- Circular economy skills: As more organizations adopt circular economy practices, there is a need for workers with skills in waste management, recycling, and upcycling.
- Environmental policy and regulation expertise: As environmental regulations become more complex, organizations need professionals with expertise in environmental policy and regulation to help them navigate regulatory frameworks and compliance requirements.
- Soft skills: Green jobs and technologies require workers with strong communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills, as well as an ability to adapt to new and changing circumstances.
- Leadership and management skills: As organizations transition to more sustainable practices, they need leaders and managers with the skills to implement and manage sustainability strategies effectively.



4. How do you identify and assess the green skills and competencies needed in your workforce, and how do you develop and deploy them effectively?

Examples may include

- Conduct a skills gap analysis to assess the current skills and competencies of your workforce. Review industry standards and certifications to identify the key green skills and competencies needed for your organization.
 - Engage with employees to identify their existing skills and competencies, as well as their interest in developing new skills through surveys, focus groups, or individual interviews.
 - Develop training and development programs – in-house training, external training courses, and on-the-job training opportunities that focus on the identified green skills and competencies needed in your organization.
 - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your training and development programs to ensure that they are meeting the needs of your organization and helping to close skills gaps.
5. What kind of training, education, and certification programs do you offer or need to offer to enhance your employees' green skills and knowledge?
- Offer training and certification programs that help employees develop green competencies and behaviors and recognize those who complete the programs.
6. How do you integrate environmental and social sustainability into your recruitment, selection, and performance management processes, and how do you measure and reward green competencies and behaviors?

This might include things like

- Knowledge of sustainable practices, commitment to reducing environmental impact, and social responsibility.
- Job descriptions and recruitment materials should clearly highlight the importance of sustainability and the specific green competencies and behaviors that you're looking for in candidates.
- Employees' performance goals should include specific sustainability targets and metrics that align with the organization's sustainability objectives. Use metrics to measure employees' environmental and social impact, such as carbon footprint, energy consumption, and community engagement.
- Reward those who demonstrate exceptional green competencies and behaviors.

7. What kind of skills, knowledge, and resources do you need to enhance your capacity for green and circular innovation and business design?

This may include

- Understanding of sustainability principles: It's important to have a basic understanding of sustainability principles, such as the circular economy, life cycle assessment, and sustainable design.
- Knowledge of green technologies and materials: A good understanding of green technologies and materials, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable materials, and waste reduction, is critical to developing sustainable products and services.
- Systems thinking and innovation skills: The ability to think critically and creatively, identify opportunities for innovation, and develop new business models and processes is essential for designing and implementing sustainable solutions.



- Collaboration and stakeholder engagement: Successful green and circular innovation and business design requires collaboration with a range of stakeholders, including customers, suppliers, regulators, and other partners.
 - Data analysis and management: Robust data collection and analysis are necessary to track environmental and social impacts, identify areas for improvement, and demonstrate progress towards sustainability goals.
 - Financial and economic skills: An understanding of the economic and financial implications of sustainable business practices is important for developing viable and profitable business models.
 - Resources and tools: Access to resources and tools, such as sustainable design guidelines, life cycle assessment tools, and sustainability certifications, can help organizations enhance their capacity for green and circular innovation and business design.
8. Do you collaborate with educational institutions, training providers, and other stakeholders to align your green skills development strategy with the evolving needs of the green economy? If yes, how do you collaborate? If no, why?
 9. Do you use digital technologies, such as e-learning, virtual reality, and gamification, to enhance your employees' engagement and motivation in green skills training and development? If yes, how do you leverage / encourage employees; If no, why? Do you have any ideas for the future?
 10. How do you measure the impact and effectiveness of your green skills development programs, and how do you use this data to continuously improve your strategy and practices?

Examples

- Develop metrics to measure the impact and effectiveness of green skills development programs including employee satisfaction, changes in behavior, improvements in environmental performance, and financial savings.
 - Analyze the data to identify trends, patterns, and areas of success and improvement, to improve strategy and practices.
11. What are the most promising circular technologies, solutions, or business models that you have identified or implemented, and how have they contributed to your sustainability and efficiency goals?
- This may include
- Closed-loop production systems, such as industrial symbiosis and closed-loop manufacturing, aim to minimize waste by using byproducts from one process as raw materials for another process. This approach can reduce waste and energy consumption while also creating new revenue streams.
 - Product-as-a-Service (PaaS) models involve selling the use of a product rather than the product itself. This approach incentivizes manufacturers to create products that are durable, repairable, and recyclable, reducing waste and promoting resource efficiency.
 - Upcycling and remanufacturing: Upcycling involves taking waste materials and transforming them into higher-value products. Remanufacturing involves refurbishing used products to like-new condition. Both approaches extend the lifespan of products, reduce waste, and promote circularity.
 - Sharing economy platforms: Sharing economy platforms, such as car-sharing and home-sharing services, allow individuals to share resources rather than owning them individually. This can reduce the environmental impact of production and consumption while also promoting social connections.



- Digital platforms for resource management: Digital platforms, such as Internet of Things (IoT) sensors and data analytics, can help organizations better manage resources, such as energy, water, and raw materials. This can lead to increased efficiency and reduced waste.
12. What kind of policies, regulations, or incentives do you think would be most effective in promoting the transition to a green economy?
- This might include
- Carbon pricing: Carbon pricing policies, such as carbon taxes or emissions trading schemes, can incentivize businesses to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by putting a price on carbon.
 - Renewable energy mandates: Renewable energy mandates require a certain percentage of electricity to be generated from renewable sources, such as wind or solar power. This policy can encourage the growth of the renewable energy sector while reducing reliance on fossil fuels.
 - Energy efficiency standards: Energy efficiency standards set minimum requirements for the energy performance of products, buildings, and appliances. This can reduce energy consumption and costs while promoting innovation in energy-efficient technologies.
 - Subsidies and grants: Government subsidies and grants can support the development and deployment of green technologies, such as electric vehicles or renewable energy projects. This can help to overcome market barriers and stimulate investment.
 - Green public procurement: Green public procurement policies require government agencies to purchase environmentally sustainable goods and services. This can create demand for green products and services and drive innovation in sustainable technologies.
 - Environmental regulations: Environmental regulations can set minimum standards for air and water quality, waste management, and other environmental impacts. This can help to reduce pollution and protect human health and the environment.
13. Do you collaborate with other organizations, governments, and civil society to address environmental challenges and promote sustainability in your industry or region? If yes, how do you collaborate? If no, why?
14. What are your short-term and long-term goals for developing green skills in your organization, and how do you plan to monitor and report on your progress towards these goals?
15. Would you be interested in hosting students and/or teachers in the future?

Thank you for your answers!

GREEN LEADERSHIP

Baltic Green Leadership: VET Students as Agents of Change

Promote VET role and
leadership in green transition



Visit us:
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Co-funded by
the European Union

Erasmus+ Cooperation Partnerships project
NO 2022-1-LV01-KA220-VET-000089171

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.

