

# D5. COLLECTION OF IDEAS BULGARIA



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## **Participant's perceptions of the topics discussed**

During the discussion, the need for more information campaigns among citizens on the topic of recycling, more recycling facilities, and collective action to reduce waste was identified. Plastic bottles and the safety of the polymers embedded in them, as well as the need for wider distribution and use of sustainable products in the daily lives of consumers, were also discussed. The need to create more sustainable product designs was also identified based on the discussion.

As was described in the National report by the Bulgarian National Association Active Consumers it was noted that there is a consensus that the societal adoption of circular behaviours and the introduction of new materials, along with stronger regulations and incentives, can significantly contribute to environmental protection.

The most effective approaches to tackling environmental issues, as perceived by participants, involve education, heavier fines for violations, and financial incentives for environmentally responsible actions.

Regarding the climate and climate changes, it is necessary to reduce energy consumption and switch to renewable energy sources (RES) in order to be a society as sustainable as possible and to reduce the import of energy resources, as well as to switch to cleaner energy sources that are inexhaustible.

Switching to clean renewable energy will reduce greenhouse gases, which is one of the most significant solutions to reducing climate change. In addition, air pollution will be reduced, making it cleaner and safer for citizens.

Separately, investments in renewable energy sources create jobs, as innovation continues to be stimulated in this way. At the moment, only private businesses are highly interested in the topic of RES due to economic interest because consumers in Bulgaria are not on the free electricity market and pay fixed electricity prices. This is a big barrier for consumers and their interest in installing RES capacities and creating energy communities.

The circulation of reusable packaging will reduce production and logistics costs. This circulation of packaging for continued use will significantly reduce sources of pollution. Such as some milk cartons are currently constructed of 3 layers of different materials that are very difficult or nearly impossible to recycle. This problem also occurs in oil packaging, which is extremely difficult to recycle.

Consumers will save by buying only the product and not paying for the packaging.

In addition to consumers, product manufacturers will dramatically reduce their packaging design, printing, manufacturing and logistics costs. Manufacturers can realise economies of scale and benefit from longer packaging life.

The production of disposable packaging often requires significant amounts of raw materials and energy. Reusable packaging has a longer lifespan and reduces resource requirements,

which contributes to optimising the materials used. A circulation system can significantly save energy and associated emissions.

In short, recommendations/considerations emerged from the “Problem solving event in Bulgaria” can be summarised as follows:

**Educational Initiatives:**

- Promote awareness: Implement comprehensive educational programs to inform citizens about the principles and benefits of a circular economy. These programs should be tailored to different age groups and include information on sustainable consumption, waste reduction, and recycling.
- Integration into school curricula: Integrate circular economy concepts into primary and secondary school curricula to instill sustainability values from an early age. This can be done through interactive and experiential learning methods.

**Incentive Programs:**

- Financial incentives: Introduce tax incentives or subsidies for businesses and individuals adopting circular economy practices. Financial rewards can stimulate investment in eco-friendly technologies and practices.
- Circular business certification: Establish a certification system recognizing businesses that actively contribute to circular economy goals. This recognition can enhance a company's reputation and encourage others to follow suit.

**Infrastructure Development:**

- Waste management infrastructure: Invest in improved waste collection and recycling infrastructure to make it easier for citizens to participate in recycling programs. Ensure convenient access to recycling facilities throughout urban and rural areas.
- Circular hubs: Create centralized circular hubs where businesses and individuals can exchange resources, fostering a culture of sharing and reducing unnecessary waste.

**Community Engagement:**

- Citizen involvement platforms: Develop online platforms where citizens can share ideas, success stories, and challenges related to circular economy practices. Encourage a sense of community and collaboration.
- Local initiatives: Support and fund local community-led circular economy projects. These initiatives can range from community gardens to repair workshops, fostering a sense of responsibility and self-sufficiency.

**Policy Advocacy:**

- Citizen participation in policy-making: Encourage citizen involvement in the development of policies related to environmental sustainability and circular economy

practices. This ensures that policies reflect the diverse needs and perspectives of the population.

- Regulatory frameworks: Implement and strengthen regulations that support circular economy practices, including extended producer responsibility and product life cycle assessments.

## **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the comprehensive discussion on environmental issues, recycling, and sustainable practices underscored the urgent need for multifaceted solution initiatives to address the challenges at hand. The importance of information campaigns to educate citizens on recycling, the establishment of more recycling facilities, and the promotion of collective efforts to minimise waste emerged as crucial focal points.

Additionally, concerns about the safety of plastics, the promotion of sustainable products, and the imperative need for innovative and sustainable product designs were highlighted.

The insights from the national report by the Bulgarian National Association Active Consumers emphasised the consensus on the pivotal role of societal adoption of circular behaviours, the introduction of new materials, and the implementation of stronger regulations and incentives to bolster environmental protection.

Participants identified education, heavier penalties for violations, as well as financial incentives for environmentally responsible actions as the most effective approaches to combat environmental issues. Addressing climate change was deemed essential through measures such as reducing energy consumption, transitioning to renewable energy sources, and promoting sustainability in the country.

Notably, the discussion emphasised the need to break down barriers hindering consumer engagement in renewable energy sources, such as fixed electricity prices.

A shift towards reusable packaging not only benefits consumers by reducing costs but also offers manufacturers opportunities for economies of scale and extended packaging life.

The implementation of these suggestions holds the potential to address pressing environmental challenges, promote circular behaviours, and contribute to the long-term well-being of both society and the planet.