

Fit for a circular future

Promoting **Competitiveness and Innovation** of Mediterranean SMEs for a Circular Economy

#4

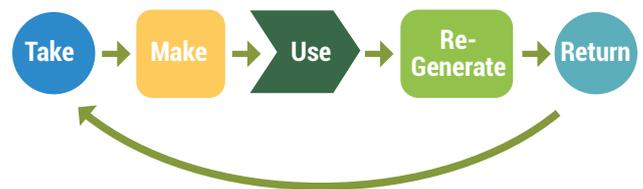
Interreg 
Mediterranean

 GREEN GROWTH

Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

A circular economy is ‘where the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimised’.

European Commission 2015



The **Circular Economy White Papers** present the contributions of the Interreg MED Green Growth community and their efforts in transitioning towards a circular economy in the Mediterranean, in the areas of :

Resource Efficiency
Green and Smart Public Services
Waste Prevention and Management
Competitiveness and Innovation

Competitiveness and Innovation

The fourth **Thematic Working Group**, that included **7 modular projects**, implemented and assessed solutions for promoting **competitiveness and innovation** within the Mediterranean region as they pertain to **Green Growth and Circular Economy**.

Objective: To emphasize the environmental and economic benefits of new and innovative business models, technologies, and changes in production systems.

Results: The modular projects have promoted eco-innovation as a driver for competitiveness, and have also emphasized the importance of multi-stakeholder clusters that stand to foster education, communication, and collaboration. Specifically the projects have produced:

- e-Labs for Creative Innovation
- Creainnovation Sustainability Evaluation Tool (CISSET)
- Open innovation labs
- Pilot plants for green manufacturing innovation
- A support service tool on the access to finance for SMEs
- Pilot services for SMEs in the green and smart mobility industry
- Testing, certification and marketing of “healthy” olive oil

The **Interreg MED Green Growth** community has created four Thematic Working Groups as a tool for collaboration and communication within its 14 modular projects to aid in the quality, efficiency, scalability and replicability of the project results.



In addition the modular projects partnered with over 2000 companies to implement at least 100 pilot applications in the manufacturing, Agro-food and mobility industries.

Projects:

ARISTOIL, CREAINNOVATION, EMBRACE, FINMED, GRASPINO, GREENOMED, REINWASTE

Relevant CE Indicators: private investments, jobs and gross value added, patents.

Main Targets: technological and methodological innovation, green jobs, patents, industrial symbiosis.

THEMATIC WORKING GROUP 4

Competitiveness and Innovation



CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

- A lack of effective clusters for companies and stakeholders to connect, work together and transfer innovations
- The limited access to tools, services and funds for SMEs to drive innovation
- Limited consumer awareness and interest in “green” and “circular” products and services

SOLUTIONS PROVIDED BY MODULAR PROJECTS

- e-Labs for Creative Innovation where innovation is produced using creative processes, tools, techniques and methodologies
- A “support service tool” to aid entrepreneurship in the access to finance
- An innovative, user-friendly toolkit used to transform businesses towards a circular economic model

CALL TO ACTION

Collectively, the Interreg MED Green Growth community contributes to enhancing the efficiency in the use of a variety of key resources such as land, energy, water, plastics, fuel and other materials.

In order to reach the full potential of the presented solutions throughout the Mediterranean region, the Interreg MED Green Growth community calls for action in the following aspects:

The European Commission and EU Member States

- To promote the dissemination, transfer and uptake of the solutions for promoting innovation and competitiveness.
- To promote investments in and uptake of eco-innovation.
- To encourage the introduction of circularity-focused criteria along with reinventing the entire procurement system with circular economy needs in mind.
- To promote the procurement of green products and services by public authorities.
- To address consumer perceptions and to raise awareness among citizens.

Regional and local authorities in the Mediterranean

- To develop action plans and programmes that incentivize the uptake of eco-innovations.
- To develop appropriate incentives and legal amendments to encourage companies.
- To create a sound business environment and a well-functioning entrepreneurial “eco-system” for business in order to foster companies’ innovation, competitiveness and sustainability.
- To mainstream sustainability criteria in public procurement processes and use platforms for connecting to SMEs as suppliers of green products and services.

SMEs

- To invest in eco-innovation, eco-design and business model innovation.
- To meet growing consumer needs/demands for resource efficient and eco-friendly products and services.
- To engage in innovation networks and clusters and to share knowledge and experiences on best practices and solutions to make value chains more resource efficient.

European Commission (2015). *Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy*
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<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/pubs/pdf/factsheets/ecoinnovation/en.pdf>

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