

Press Release

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ACR+ invites its members to approach circular economy as a holistic system

How can communities of practice accelerate the transition towards a circular and resilient Europe? ACR+ invited experts to discuss the pathways to a circular resilient Europe with its members during an Open Session of its General Assembly 2022. Moving away from the traditional definition of a model of production and consumption aiming to keep materials and products as long as possible, participants were suggested to take into consideration all aspects of sustainability when talking about circular economy, especially the cultural one.

Brussels, Belgium – “The best way to get a good idea is to have a lot! ACR+ has definitely understood it”. Welcoming participants of the Open Session of the Association of Cities and Regions for sustainable Resource management (ACR+) General Assembly 2022 on 10 June 2022, Alain Maron, Minister of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Participatory Democracy, highlighted the importance of the network which helps cities and regions take inspiration from their neighbours on different aspects linked to resource efficiency. Brussels itself boasts inspiring projects to reach a decarbonized by 2050 as Minister Maron presented with the ambitious strategy Shifting Economy that aims to transform Brussels’ economy into a decarbonised, regenerative, circular, inclusive, democratic, and digital economy. Minister Maron also reminded participants that the roots of the network are intimately linked with Brussels, as it was founded in 1994 by a group of cities led by the Brussels-Capital Region.



Since then, ACR+ has come a long way and is now recognized as one of the key international actors representing and supporting cities and regions in the transition towards circular economy. Building on its experience, the network invited key experts to join the Open Session of its General Assembly and discuss with its members how to empower the sustainable transition and give way to a circular resilient Europe. Guided by a keynote speech of Mathieu Leporini, Scientific Researcher and Cooperation Expert at the CERDI Université Clermont Auvergne – CNRS, the audience of the BEL Conference Centre was invited to approach the circular economy under a broader perspective.

He highlighted the importance of not holistic and systemic approaches but also cooperation when talking about circular economy. To change this paradigm, **a cultural shift is needed since cultural barriers are the biggest ones on our current path to a resilient Europe**. This is why, he recommended ACR+ members to integrate all aspects of sustainability, especially social, cultural and political ones, in the circular solutions that they develop.



This thought was echoed during the fruitful and constructive dialogue offered by the following panel discussion between Mathieu Leporini, Emmanuelle Maire from the European Commission – DG ENV, Annika Eskusson from the European Commission – DG RTD, Maria Nikolopoulou from the European Economic and Social Committee, and Adrian Hiel from Energy Cities. Starting from wondering what each guest's

definition of circular economy is, the exchange showed **the importance to perceive circular economy as a helpful evolutive concept to which people can relate in different ways**. Some may find it a powerful tool to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, a positive spin for action others a pool of opportunities or a set of solutions to tackle current environmental challenges.

Whatever the definition adopted at individual level, the participants of the ACR+ General Assembly agreed that **the transition to a circular economy must be accelerated and made accessible to all**. This will become a reality on the condition of also adopting on a wide scale the appropriate sufficiency in energy, food, and manufactured products consumption. By building connections between its members and with experts as those invited for the Open Session, ACR+ is acting in this direction. It offers tools and support for local authorities to deliver concrete solutions and make things happen on the ground for citizens.

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The Association of Cities and Regions for sustainable Resource management (ACR+) is an international network of cities and regions sharing the aim of promoting sustainable resource management and accelerating the transition towards a circular economy on their territories and beyond. The network, gathering around 90 members, is open to other key players in the field of material resource management such as NGOs, academic institutions, consultancies or private organisations. Members' needs and priorities define the network's activities, which include facilitating the exchange of experiences between members, sharing technical and policy information and livening up the network. To strengthen the knowledge and capacities of the network and push for innovation in the field of material resource management, ACR+ is also involved in several projects at European level and in the Mediterranean region, in cooperation with its members.

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