



# BEST PRACTICE IN ADULT EDUCATION FOR A JUST TRANSITION

**ECCO**

**Empowering Communities with  
Circular Opportunities**

**JULY 2024**



Co-funded by  
the European Union

## ECCO

### – Empowering Communities with Circular Opportunities

#### Context and Initiative Details

Name of the initiative	ECCO (Empowering Communities with Circular Opportunities), run by the Rediscovery Centre
Geographical scope	National
Sources of funding	Dept of Environment, Climate Action & Communications
Duration of the initiative	September 2022 – September 2025
Target audience	Particularly those from disadvantaged areas and groups and long-term unemployed (current participants are 70% from these groups)
Social justice focus area	Just Transition, circular economy
Goals of the initiative	This project involves co-creating and delivering support to empower communities, including communities at disadvantage, to develop new reuse or repair projects based on their needs. The project aims to move beyond simply ‘raising awareness’ to inspiring action projects, while also delivering direct social impact, such as building skills and knowledge in communities and generating training and job opportunities and career pathways.

#### Good Practices Description

##### Stakeholder engagement in the process

At the outset the project ran community mapping activities in all four geographical settings and engaged communities re needs assessment, seeking to identify what would be most practical for each community.

##### Methodology used

The project builds on the Rediscovery Centre’s successful Circular Economy Academy and involves providing group training and one-to-one support, focused on a learning-by-doing approach.

Group sessions are a mix of knowledge and skills acquisition.

Participants are supported to either advance or initiate local projects illustrative of the circular economy.

Central to the evolution of the delivery programme has been co-creation, with participants contributing to its shape and content.

##### Teaching approaches

The programme is delivered in four locales, each receiving 9 x 2hr workshops, 2 x site visits and 3hrs of 1-2-1 mentoring. There will be a showcase at the end of the first run of the programme in June 2024 to celebrate participants’ journeys and achievement. (the second iteration of the programme will commence in Sept 2024).

## Challenges and outcomes

### Key factors contributing to success

- Co-creation approach
- The trainers' skills in building relationships that reach beyond the participants and into their communities
- Building trust
- Focus on circular economy which has more obvious and immediate impact for participants
- Site visits – showed examples of success and deepened group bonding
- Holding occasional coffee mornings for informal discussions

### Encountered difficulties and challenges

The expectation that all would undertake projects is not happening as some are not ready or in a position to undertake a project. However, they have gained a huge amount from the learning process, particularly in terms of confidence building. Building trust has been critical as some areas, particularly rural, have been negatively impacted by economic policies tied to climate change e.g. job losses. There was one instance of direct challenge to a trainer, accused of being a climate scammer, with populist right-wing conspiracy theories quoted. This was unexpected and raises issues for future training of trainers to deal with such incidents.

### Recommendations

At macro level the programme is about advocating for the promotion of the circular economy and ensuring that all citizens are brought along. At the meso level it would recommend the co-creation approach to empower participants and focus delivery on real needs. More will emerge at the micro level once the first programme is completed and further reflection is possible.

### Impact

The first programme recruited 20 participants, coming from a wide mix of backgrounds, but particularly representing long-term unemployed and those from economically disadvantaged areas and groups. Retention has been strong.

Social impact has been strong with notable confidence and trust building and strong inclusivity.

More information on the projects undertaken by participants will be available after the conclusion of delivery in June 2024 (see the project page - [ECCO](#)).