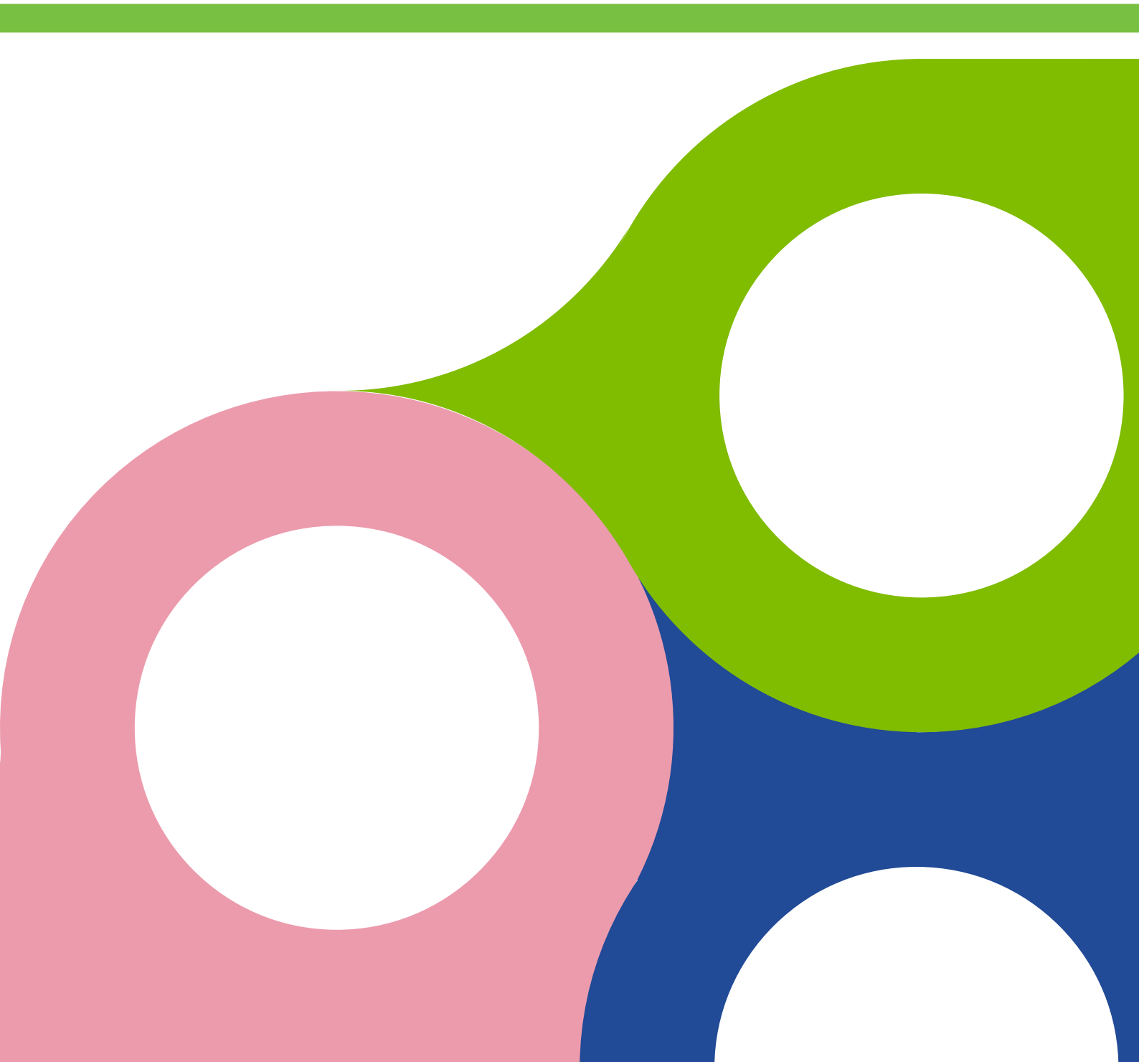


Young generations in building a circular economy



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The World Economic Forum (WEF) draws attention to the key role that YOUNG generations play in the transition towards a circular economy. This role is multidimensional and encompasses various aspects of young people's activities in society and the economy.

Young Consumers

As consumers, young people are showing new expectations of products and services, preferring those that are sustainable and environmentally friendly. Their consumer choices are increasingly driven by environmental awareness and a desire to minimise their negative impact on the environment. This generation is looking for recycled, easily repairable or reusable products, forcing manufacturers to rethink their production processes and adapt their offerings to market expectations. Young consumers are also more inclined to support local businesses and social initiatives, fostering the development of a circular economy.

Innovative Entrepreneurs

The young generation is also a source of innovation, as young entrepreneurs and start-ups are more aware of the limitations of the current economic model and are looking for new sustainable solutions. Examples include developing technologies that enable more efficient use of resources, creating sharing platforms that reduce the need for ownership and promoting services instead of products, which reduces waste production and raw material consumption. These innovations are not only changing the way businesses are run, but also how society approaches consumption and production.

Education and Awareness

The World Economic Forum also emphasises the importance of education and awareness-raising among young people about the circular economy and sustainability. Through educational programmes,

workshops and awareness campaigns, young people can better understand the challenges and opportunities of a green transition, prompting them to actively participate in the change both as consumers and entrepreneurs.

Challenges and Opportunities

The transformation to a circular economy is a complex process, requiring changes in many areas, from product design to production systems to business models and consumer behaviour. The younger generations, with their energy, creativity and readiness to act, are not only beneficiaries of these changes, but also catalysts for them. Their commitment and initiatives can accelerate the transition to a more sustainable future, showing that a different economy - a more circular and sustainable one - is possible.



One initiative that supports Europe's transition to a more sustainable and circular economic model is the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP). This platform acts as a hub to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders, including businesses, NGOs, academic institutions and government bodies, who are committed to promoting and implementing the principles of the circular economy.

One of the key activities organised by ECESP is the **#EUCircularTalks** events. These are a series of discussions and meetings aimed at sharing knowledge, experiences and best practices related to the circular economy. These events provide a platform for representatives from different sectors to share ideas, innovations and challenges related to the transformation towards a more sustainable development.

Purpose of #EUCircularTalks:

The main objective of **#EUCircularTalks** is to highlight the role and INVOLVEMENT of YOUNG PEOPLE in the transition to a circular economy. Recognising that the younger generations will be key agents of change in the future, these events focus on identifying areas where youth can have a significant impact and promoting youth-led initiatives and projects.

KEY AREAS OF YOUTH ACTIVISM:



Various topics are discussed during #EUCircularTalks, which can include sustainable consumption and production, recycling and waste management innovations, closed-loop design, and the development of green technologies and solutions. Young people are encouraged to actively participate in the discussions, present their own projects and share ideas on how they can contribute to building a sustainable future. Young people are involved in #EUCircularTalks as key participants and contributors to discussions on the circular economy. Their role, benefits of participation and learning at these events can be defined in the following categories:

The role of young people

Young people act as innovators and change agents, sharing their ideas, projects and initiatives that are in line with the principles of the circular economy.

They take active part in discussions, panels and workshops, where they can express their opinions, ask questions and exchange experiences with experts and other participants.

They act as ambassadors of ecological awareness in their communities, promoting the ideas of sustainable development and circular economy.

Benefits of participating in #EUCircularTalks for the young generation

They learn about key circular economy principles and practices, including how to minimize waste, use resources efficiently and promote sustainability.

They develop the critical thinking, problem-solving and creativity skills that are necessary to rethink and transform current production and consumption models.

They gain knowledge about sustainable development, its impact on the environment and society, and the role they can play in promoting green initiatives.



#EUCircularTalks offer networking and collaboration opportunities between young people, experts, businesses and organizations operating in the circular economy.

Young people can strengthen their voice and influence in shaping policies and initiatives related to sustainable development and the circular economy.

Participating in #EUCircularTalks enables personal and professional development, opening the way to a career in fields related to sustainability and ecology.

On June 3, 2023, one of the #EUCircularTalks meetings organized by the European Circular Economy Stakeholders Platform (ECESP) and Generation Climate Europe (GCE) took place, focused on youth involvement in the circular economy. The event highlighted the role of young people as consumers with changing expectations towards sustainable development and as innovators, ready to rethink production and consumption habits.

Youth were engaged in several ways, reflecting the two-fold purpose of the event: first, to highlight their commitment and call to action in the circular economy through the projects and initiatives they developed. Secondly, identifying key areas where young people can actively contribute to the transition to a circular economy in Europe.

The meeting began with a welcome by the moderator and introductory remarks from key figures, including representatives of the European Parliament and the European Economic and Social Committee. This was followed by an introductory session and panel discussion with experts from the European Commission, start-up founders and academic researchers who shared their experiences and perspectives on the circular economy. The event also included parallel workshops in which young Europeans involved in the circular economy co-led discussions on four priority sectors: textiles, digitalization, food and energy. Each workshop focused on a specific aspect of the circular economy and offered young people the opportunity to share their ideas and discuss ways to promote changes in the production and consumption of digital devices, manage food waste and food safety, and encourage sustainable energy use and production.

#EUCircularTalks meetings show how important a role young people play in promoting and implementing circular economy principles, both as consumers and future leaders and innovators. #EUCircularTalks provide a platform where young people not only learn and develop, but also have a real impact on promoting and shaping the future of the circular economy.

