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PubCirEco

Critical Role of Public Employees in Circular Economy Implementation

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IN THIS eLEAFLET

Study visit in Tallinn brought together nine higher education institutions to exchange best practices and strengthen collaboration on integrating circular economy principles into urban development and higher education curricula.

From 19 to 21 May 2026, Tallinna Tehnikakõrgkool hosted international partners within the Erasmus+ project "PubCirEco – Critical role of PUBLIC employees in CIRcular ECONomy implementation: Embedding circular economy thinking in HEIs". The meeting brought together representatives from nine higher education institutions to strengthen cooperation in circular economy and sustainable higher education development.

The visit was structured around two closely interconnected objectives: first, exploring Tallinn's experience and practices in implementing circular economy principles at the city level; and second, examining how circular economy thinking is embedded in higher education institutions through curricula, study programmes, and learning processes.



Focus and Key Themes of the Study Visit

1. Urban circular economy practices and Tallinn's experience

Participants gained an in-depth overview of how circular economy principles are implemented in Tallinn through practical, real-world solutions. Key topics included:

- waste reduction systems and material reuse models
- municipal circular economy centers and service frameworks
- reuse of industrial by-products and secondary materials
- digital solutions for monitoring and optimizing resource flows.

Site visits to the Lasnamäe Circular Economy Centre and the Paljassaare Wood Repair Workshop demonstrated how theoretical circular economy concepts are translated into operational and scalable urban services.

2. Integration of circular economy into higher education

A second major focus was the embedding of circular economy principles into university teaching and research activities, including:

- integration of sustainability and circular economy topics into curricula
- interdisciplinary and project-based learning approaches
- use of digital technologies (including digital twins) in education
- collaboration between universities, public sector institutions, and industry.

Emphasis was placed on connecting sustainability topics with real-world, problem-based learning to enhance the practical relevance of study outcomes.

Programme Highlights

The opening day took place at the Kaasamiskeskus Conference Centre, where experts introduced applications of digital twin technologies in industry and education. These presentations-initiated discussions on how data-driven modelling and simulation tools can support resource efficiency and decision-making in both industrial and academic contexts. This was followed by a working session at Tallinna Tehnikakõrgkool, where partners mapped future cooperation opportunities, including joint educational modules and research collaboration directions.

The second day focused on Tallinn's municipal circular economy initiatives. During the visits and discussions, participants explored:

- how the city supports the development of circular economy ecosystems
- the role of public institutions in waste reduction strategies
- ways in which local businesses are engaged in reuse and recycling systems

A seminar at Tallinna Tehnikaülikool provided further insights into how circular economy principles are integrated into academic programmes across engineering and economics disciplines.

On the third day, participants took part in a hands-on workshop based on the Circulab Toolbox methodology. The session focused on:

- analyzing business models through a circular economy lens
- mapping resource flows and value chains
- developing prototype solutions for circular systems
- exploring scenarios for resource-efficient innovation

The workshop aimed to bridge theory and practice by transforming conceptual discussions into actionable circular economy solutions.

Study Visit Impact and Outcomes

The study visit significantly strengthened international collaboration among nine higher education institutions and laid the foundation for future joint initiatives in circular economy education and research.

Key outcomes included:

- exchange of best practices across different countries
- development of a shared understanding of circular economy education approaches
- dissemination of practical tools and methodologies
- reinforcement of European academic collaboration networks

The visit demonstrated that circular economy is not only a technical or environmental concept, but also an educational and institutional transformation requiring systematic integration into curricula and research activities.