

**WORKSHOP WITH YOUNG PEOPLE "Attitudes of young people from less developed environments on sustainable development and transition to a circular model of economy" and ROUND TABLE "Transition to a circular model of economy: the role of local self-governments"**

**Boljevac, 24.09.2024**

Address : Tourist organization of Boljevac, Educational Center, Ilino

**Workshop Agenda**

11:45 – 12:00	Registration of participants	
12:00 – 12:15	Welcome speech in front of Educons University	Prof. Gordana Racić, PhD
12:15 – 12:30	Presentation of the project "Circular Economy as a Model of Development That Forms a New Identity of the Republic of Serbia - EDUCIRC2022"	Prof. Diona Đurđević, PhD
12:30 – 12:45	Circular Economy as a Driver of Youth Empowerment in Rural Areas	Prof. Gordana Racić, PhD
12:45 – 13:00	Youth in the Countryside - Digital Technologies and Marketing in the Function of the Circular Economy	Prof. Diona Đurđević, PhD
13:00 – 14:00	Interview with participants / young people in rural areas Attitudes of young people from the municipality of Boljevac on sustainable development and transition to the circular economy model	Assoc. Prof. Aleksandra Jerkov, PhD
14:00 – 15:00	Lunch	

## Agenda Roundtable

14:00 – 15:00	Lunch	
15:00 – 15:30	Presentation of the project "Circular Economy as a Model of Development That Forms a New Identity of the Republic of Serbia - EDUCIRC2022"	Prof. Diona Đurđević, PhD
15:30 – 15:45	Transition from Linear to Circular Economy: Potentials and Opportunities in the Republic of Serbia	Prof. Simonida Vukadinović, PhD
15:45 – 16:30	Discussion with participants/agricultural professional services and founders of agricultural holdings on the topic "Transition to a circular model of economy: the role of local self-governments"	
16:30 – 17:00	Promotion of the monograph	

The workshop and round table were attended by members of the project team:

Prof. Gordana Racić, PhD

Prof. Diona Đurđević, PhD

Prof. Simonida Vukadinović, PhD

Assoc. Prof. Aleksandra Jerkov, PhD

As part of the project, it is planned to hold workshops in different regions of the Republic of Serbia, with the aim of promoting the project, talking to locals and discussing. In order to obtain the most representative results that would reflect the situation in the country, it was determined that **the Fourth Workshop** and **Round Table** will be held in the municipality of Boljevac, in the Zajecar district.

The workshop was dedicated to the empowerment of young people in rural areas, and the round table focused on the discussion of the role of local governments on the topic of transition to a circular model of economy. In order to successfully implement both events, cooperation was established with the director of the tourist organization in Boljevac, Dragan Milojević, which

founded and built the Educational Center in the village of Ilino, where meetings and events related to the growth and development of the municipality are held for several years.

Bearing in mind the objectives of the project, it was necessary to discuss the transition of the Serbian economy towards a circular model with representatives of local self-government, but also with representatives of companies from the region, such as Elikvir Prahovo, Negotin, and owners of agricultural holdings, who have valuable knowledge and a realistic picture of the situation in rural areas through field work. It was also very helpful to communicate with the Agricultural Expert Service from the Zaječar District.

The President of the Municipality of Boljevac, Slađan Đimiš, Agricultural Engineer, with his presence, supported the activities of the project and emphasized the interest in cooperation and usability of the results of the project in his municipality.

During **the Workshop**, which was held according to the planned Agenda, four basic activities were carried out, and after the presentation of the mission, vision and scientific research work and development, as well as the project activities of the University, which was done by Prof. Dr. Gordana Racić.

The presentation of the project "Circular Economy as a Model of Development That Forms a New Identity of the Republic of Serbia - EDUCIRC2022", which was carried out by prof. Diona Đurđević, PhD. explained the basic motives, goals, activities and results of the project.

The presentation "Circular economy as a driver of youth empowerment in rural areas" was reflected by Prof. Dr. Gordana Racić, where the brochure of the same name was promoted, the need to empower young people to recognize the opportunities provided by the circular economy and how they can use them to improve their communities was emphasized.

The importance of digital technologies and marketing in the function of the circular economy was discussed by prof. Diona Đurđević, PhD.

Conversations with the participants of the workshop were given the utmost attention. According to the project plan, special attention was paid to young people in rural areas, so most of the participants were this population. The discussion on the issues of their status and knowledge in the field of circular economy was led by Aleksandra Jekov, PhD.

The participants took an active part in the discussion, and recorded their answers and views on the concept of circularity in a questionnaire, which will later be processed and present the basis for the preparation of the Youth Guide, as one of the expected results of the project. The role of young people in the municipality of Boljevac has been recognized and will be realized through the signed cooperation agreement between the Youth Alliance of OPENERS associations and 10 local self-government units, which marks the beginning of mentoring support to cities and municipalities in the establishment of Youth Centers and Clubs. The agreement was signed by representatives of 10 municipalities, including Boljevac, which officially launched this important process. This cooperation is part of a wider program "Transformation of Youth Policy", which aims to improve conditions for young people in local communities through the establishment of youth spaces for their personal development, creativity and active participation in society. Mentoring support is provided by the Youth Federation of the OPENS Association, following the example of the OPENS

Youth Center in Novi Sad. Through this agreement, OPENS has undertaken the obligation to provide professional assistance at all stages of the establishment and operation of new youth spaces.

Summarizing the results and considering future cooperation showed that there is a mutual interest of the members of the project team EDUCIRC2022 and representatives of young people from the municipality of Boljevac, the tourist organization of the municipality of Boljevac and their potential involvement in further project activities and the preparation of recommendations for more active participation and cooperation with decision-makers.

The discussion was moderated by Dr. Simonida Vukadinović, who presented the basic models of the circular economy and the possibilities of the Republic of Serbia in the process of transition from the traditional to the circular model.

In the context of a company such as Elixir Prahovo, which is engaged in the production of mineral fertilizers, the implementation of the principles of circular economy represents a significant challenge, but also a great opportunity to improve business and reduce the negative impact on the environment. There are various possibilities of applying the principles of circular economy in the company Elixir Prahovo. One is wastewater recycling, through the treatment and reuse of wastewater in the production process, fresh water consumption can be significantly reduced and the burden on local water resources can be reduced. Through the implementation of modern technologies for wastewater treatment, the production of high-quality water that can be used for irrigation or other industrial processes is considered. Second, no less important, possibility is the use of by-products resulting from the production process of mineral fertilizers that can be used as raw materials in other industries or as additives in agriculture. For example, phosphogypsum, which is formed as a by-product of the production of phosphoric acid, can be used in construction or as an additive in the production of cement. The third option highlighted by the company's representatives is the role in energy efficiency, where reducing energy consumption in the production process can be achieved through the application of energy-efficient technologies, such as heat pumps, cogeneration and solar panels. The company also has an intention to produce biofertilizers from organic waste, such as compost and manure, which reduces the use of mineral fertilizers and affects soil quality. All of these opportunities have certain challenges that the company must think before implementation, such as creating market conditions that will stimulate demand for products obtained on the basis of the principles of the circular economy.

The added value to the development of the municipality can be seen through the work of the Tourism Organization, which encourages economic development by providing adequate accommodation capacities, trim trails on the Rtanj mountain, actively cooperates with farmers by supporting the sale of local products both at the municipal level and at fairs. They are actively involved in working with young people from the municipality, involving them through volunteer activities in various events that are held in cooperation with the municipality and their representatives.

As one of the conclusions of the representative of the agricultural expert service from Zajecar, Agrozanjanje, Slavica Dželatović, it is pointed out that the establishment of partnerships and

cooperation with farmers can enable the exchange of knowledge and experience in the field of sustainable agriculture and the promotion of the circular economy in agricultural production.

Honey producer, Miodrag Trifunovic, pointed out that they are advocating and educating about the reduced use of harmful agents in fruit growing, with a special focus on the protection of bees. In cooperation with the municipalities of Boljevac and Sokobanja, "Rtanjski med" was created with a protected geographical indication for multifloral honey that is produced exclusively in parts of the territories of these two municipalities, i.e. in the defined geographical area of the Rtanj mountain. Thanks to the floristic richness of the Rtanj Mountain, which is home to 17.55% of the total number of species and subspecies of the flora of Serbia, as many as 96 types of pollen have been identified in Rtanjski med. Also, in the flora of the Rtanj Mountain, 25 endemic species and subspecies of flora have been identified, which is an indicator of the exceptional originality of the geographical area where "Rtanjski med" is produced.

The President of the Municipality of Boljevac also gave the final word in the discussion, pointing out that the municipality supports and encourages the development of agriculture in various areas, farming, vegetable growing, and fruit growing. In terms of rural tourism, support was provided for the construction of an educational center, in order to present the municipality in the best way, and provide additional education in various areas to its population. He pointed out that a large number of young people are engaged in production, which proves their dedication and awareness of their importance in decision-making. So far, they haven't had any incentives, but they intend to.

The president also believes that the role of women in decision-making is at a significant level, because the male part of the population is employed in other jobs, in addition to agriculture, and they are the ones who are the holders of the farms. With the purchase of new machinery and the introduction of new technologies, the application of new agrotechnical measures, it is expected that the organization and holders of farms where the younger generations take over the primacy will be structurally changed.

On this occasion, the Monograph: "Economic Development Policy (with Chapters on Green Transition and Circular Economy Model)" was presented, as well as the Educational and Informative Brochure: "Circular Economy as a Driver of Youth Empowerment in Rural Areas".

The report on the event was broadcast on 05.10.2024 on Agro TV as part of the show Agropopodne, and can be viewed at the following link, the report from the 12th minute:

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qFI68AJPdVM>**



Figure 1. Opening of the Fourth Workshop, prof. Gordana Racić, PhD (Educons University)

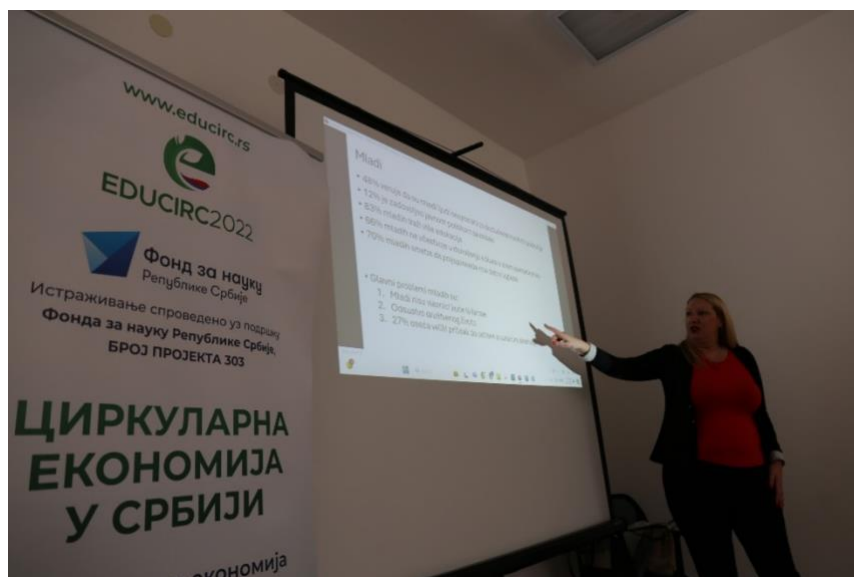


Figure 2. Prof. Dr. Diona Đurđević (Educons University) on the project and the importance of digital technologies and marketing



Figure 3. Dr Aleksandra Jerkov leads a discussion with young people



Figure 4 Prof. Simonida Vukadinović, PhD, Assoc. Prof. Aleksandra Jerkov, PhD and participants of the round table in the discussion (Slavica Dželatović (PSSS Agroznanje), Slađan Đimiš (President of the Municipality of Boljevac), Miodrag Trifunovic (producer of Rtanjski med), Dragan Milojević (director of the Boljevac Tourist Organization), Danijel Stevanovic (representative of the company Eliksir Prahovo))



Figure 5. Educational and informative brochure: "Circular economy as a driver of youth empowerment in rural areas". Dragan Milojević, director of the Boljevac travel agency, looks at the brochure.

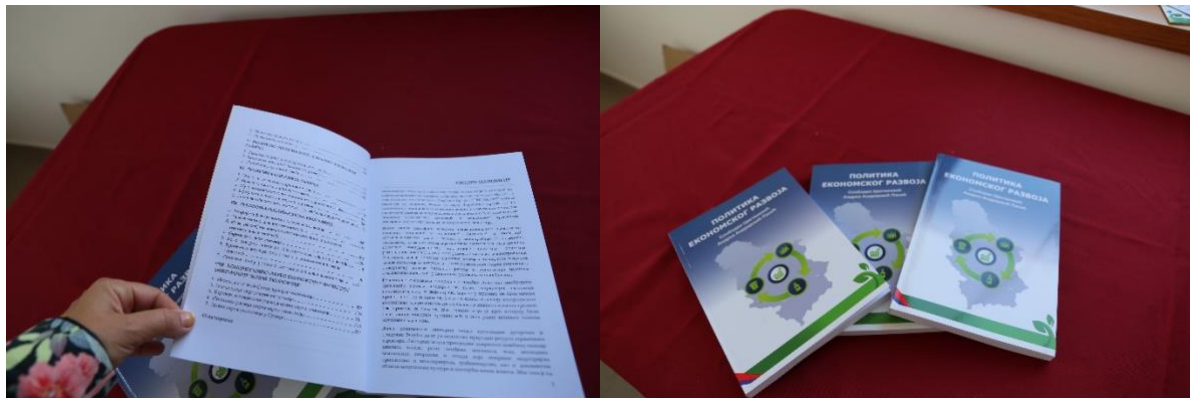


Figure 6. Presentation of the monograph: "Economic Development Policy (with Chapters on Green Transition and Circular Model of Economy)"