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Social Entrepreneurship in a circular economy in Calabria

Didactic Material nr. 14



Introduction

We buy, we use, we throw away. And create pollution. This is nowadays a typical behavior, what millions of humans do every day, damaging the sustainability of the planet.

In Calabria, this problem is very noticeable, but it also creates new opportunities. More and more people are exploring social entrepreneurship within a circular economy, finding ways to reduce waste, recycle resources, and at the same time support local communities.

What is it?

Social entrepreneurship in the circular economy is about innovating for people and planet simultaneously – tackling waste and overconsumption while making sure the benefits reach communities.

The circular economy is a system that transforms waste into valuable resources for new products and production. In this model, everything has a purpose, and consumption is minimized.

Watch a documentary “Wasted! The Story of Food Waste”. about food waste problems and creative solutions to learn more about this topic!

[Click here](#) to watch a trailer. Full film available on Amazon Prime, Apple TV.

In Calabria, growing interest in a circular approach is driving practical solutions rooted in local culture and geography. One exciting example is social farming, where organizations reuse confiscated land to create educational agriculture, recycling programs, and ecosystem services that benefit both people and nature. Check out some interesting data about Calabria from Comuni Ricicloni 2025.

These initiatives not only transform “waste into resource” but also build community resilience by offering training, social integration, and sustainable land use.

Why is it important?

Social entrepreneurship in a circular economy is basically where doing good for people and doing good for the planet meet. In Calabria, a region with rich natural resources but economic challenges, sustainability is a pressing issue. Every practice that reduces waste, preserves ecosystems, and promotes resource reuse is valuable. It helps protect the environment, support local jobs, and strengthen the regional economy by encouraging innovation beyond traditional sectors.

Here you can watch a [quick video on what is Social Entrepreneurship](#).

What are the benefits?

1. Sustainable Solutions

Social entrepreneurs in Calabria develop innovative approaches to reuse, recycle, and repurpose resources, helping reduce waste. Some examples are [Fare Eco](#), an initiative from Reggio di Calabria, or [Cantina Librandi](#).

2. Community Impact

They tackle social challenges by creating jobs, supporting local communities, and including marginalized groups. Projects like Social Farming transform unused land into productive spaces that benefit both people and the environment.

3. Environmental Protection

By prioritizing resource efficiency and minimizing waste, these enterprises help conserve Calabria's natural heritage, reducing pollution and combating climate change.

4. Economic Growth

Circular economy ventures stimulate local economies by fostering new industries, supporting small businesses, and creating resilient job opportunities across the region.

5. Innovation

Calabrian social entrepreneurs drive creative solutions, from composting programs to PVC upcycling, showing how waste can be transformed into valuable resources while protecting natural heritage. [Plastilab](#) is a really interesting initiative about plastic recycling in Crotone.

6. Education and Awareness

Initiatives often engage the public, raising awareness about sustainable practices and inspiring broader adoption of circular economy principles in local communities. [Click here](#) to discover an example of formation in these topics.

What can I do?

Support Sustainable Local Businesses

Look for Calabrian shops and farms that practice eco-friendly or regenerative methods. On [this website](#) you can see an example of a project that fosters the balance between economy, environment, and society.

Discover Circular Solutions with an App

Try [Mercato Circolare](#), a free app that helps users in Italy—Calabria included—find circular economy products, services, and events nearby. It connects citizens with local circular initiatives and promotes sustainable consumption.

Participate in Eco-Events

Attend sustainability-focused workshops, fairs, and local eco-events, like [Kalabria Eco Fest](#) in Calabria, to learn about circular practices, meet like-minded people, and get involved first-hand. Also, the [ecoforum regionale di Legambiente](#)

Volunteer Your Skills

Support social enterprises like social farming projects that rejuvenate unused land into educational, inclusive, and sustainable farming initiatives that benefit the community and biodiversity.

Invest in Social Enterprises

Back local initiatives like eco-villages, cooperative farms, or businesses upcycling materials or creating compost solutions. Your support helps build a resilient and equitable local economy. [Here you can read a bit about some initiatives in Calabria.](#)

Adopt Circular Habits

Start composting, repair instead of buy, and choose locally produced goods. Even small actions help shift toward a more sustainable lifestyle centered on reuse and renewal.

Educate and Engage Online

Tune into [The Circular Economy Show Podcast by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#), to explore global circular economy concepts and innovations—and be inspired to apply them locally.

What have I learnt?

- Social entrepreneurship in Calabria shows that **businesses can create positive social and environmental impact**, not just profit.
- Practicing circular economy principles **helps reduce waste, protect natural resources** like Calabria's mountains, forests, and coasts, and support local biodiversity.
- Supporting local social enterprises **strengthens communities, sustains jobs, and preserves cultural and culinary heritage**.
- Sustainability is interconnected: what we consume, how we produce, and **how we manage resources affect people, nature, and local economies**.
- Circular practices—like upcycling, regenerative agriculture, and mindful consumption—can be applied every day, **making sustainability a practical lifestyle, not just a theory**.
- Social entrepreneurship teaches innovation, fairness, and community engagement as tools to **challenge conventional practices and build resilient, eco-conscious societies**.

All is summarized in the [European approach of Microcredentials](#).

Micro-credential 1

Understanding Social Entrepreneurship

1.1 Value sustainability by reflecting on personal values while critically evaluating how they align with sustainability values. 1.2 Supporting fairness to support equity and justice for current and future generations and learn from previous generations for sustainability. 1.3 Promoting nature to acknowledge that humans are part of nature; and to respect the needs and rights of other species and of nature itself in order to restore and regenerate healthy and resilient ecosystems.

Micro-credential 2

Acting for a Circular Economy

2.1 (Systems thinking), to approach a sustainability problem from all sides; to consider times, space and context in order to understand how elements interact within and between systems.

2.2 (Critical thinking) To assess information and arguments, identify assumptions, challenge the status quo, and reflect on how personal, social and cultural backgrounds influence thinking and conclusions.

2.3 (Problem framing) To formulate current or potential challenges as a sustainability problem in terms of difficulty, people involved, time and geographical scope, in order to identify suitable approaches to anticipating and preventing problems, and to mitigating and adapting to already existing problems.

Micro-credential 4

“Acting for sustainability”

4.2 (Collective action) to act for change in collaboration with others. 4.3 (Individual initiative) to identify own potential for sustainability and to actively contribute to improving prospects for the community and the planet.