

CIREVALC E-NEWSLETTER #4

Circular economy pilots across Central Europe

Real businesses testing circular solutions in food, catering and packaging

Across Central Europe, companies from the food, catering and packaging sectors are testing practical circular economy solutions through the CIREVALC Accelerator.

The pilot activities demonstrate how businesses – from small family farms and community initiatives to technology innovators – can reduce waste, improve resource efficiency and develop new sustainable business models.

The experiences show that circular economy principles are not only theoretical concepts. They are already being applied in everyday business operations across the region.

This newsletter presents selected examples of companies that participated in the CIREVALC pilots and explored new ways to turn circular thinking into practical action.



Vegadokk - When circular packaging meets food safety

One of the most complex challenges in sustainable food systems is balancing circular packaging solutions with strict food safety requirements.

Hungarian company Vegadokk Ltd., which produces locally sourced “free-from” food products, addressed exactly this challenge during its participation in the CIREVALC Accelerator.

The company examined alternative packaging materials that could maintain product integrity while preventing allergen cross-contamination – a crucial requirement for allergen-free food production.

At the same time, the pilot analysed the implications of the upcoming EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR). Understanding these regulatory requirements allowed the company to identify realistic circular packaging options that remain compliant with food safety standards.



The analysis showed that certain allergen-safe packaging materials qualify as “contact-sensitive”, which opens specific regulatory pathways within the PPWR framework.

The project also explored financing opportunities for investing in new energy-efficient packaging machinery to support future expansion.

Beyond technical improvements, Vegadokk recognised that companies can influence sustainability across their entire value chain by setting environmental requirements for suppliers.

The pilot demonstrated that circular solutions in food production must combine innovation, regulatory understanding and supply-chain cooperation.



Circular packaging solutions in the food industry must balance environmental ambition with strict safety standards.

Spolek Bezoví - A community-driven circular grocery model

Circular economy principles are not limited to industrial systems. They can also transform everyday consumer behaviour.

The Czech organisation Spolek Bezoví operates Community Store ZERO (BEZ), a member-run zero-waste grocery store focused on packaging-free retail and cooperation with local suppliers.

Within the CIREVALC Community Accelerator, the organisation worked on strengthening its long-term sustainability strategy.

The pilot analysed energy consumption in the store’s historic building and identified realistic optimisation measures. Experts also provided guidance on funding opportunities for circular investments and helped improve sustainability communication.

International knowledge exchange played a key role. Study visits and networking with organisations such as Food Cluster Linz provided practical inspiration and strengthened partnerships.

The pilot showed that community retail can serve as a powerful platform for promoting sustainable consumption patterns and strengthening local circular supply chains.



Community-based initiatives can translate circular economy principles into everyday consumer practices.

Vina Bažon - From wine by-products to award-winning spirits

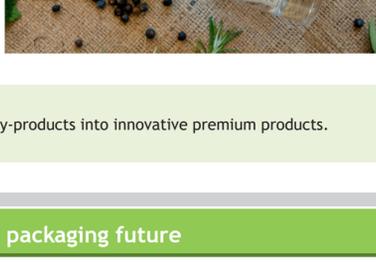
The Bažon family farm in Istria produces wine from its own vineyards using traditional production methods.

Through the CIREVALC pilot, the winery explored how by-products from wine production could be transformed into valuable new products rather than waste.

Grape skins and seeds were incorporated into a distillation process to produce craft gin, while stems were composted to close the organic material loop.

The newly developed gin was successfully introduced to the market and received recognition at international spirits competitions.

The project demonstrated how circular thinking can turn production residues into new revenue streams, strengthening both environmental performance and business resilience.



Circular approaches can transform agricultural by-products into innovative premium products.

ReSpray - Refillable technology for a new packaging future

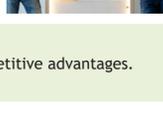
Hungarian startup ReSpray Solutions is developing refill stations that allow consumers to refill spray cans instead of purchasing new ones.

These refill stations are already available in several drugstores across Hungary and represent a promising alternative to single-use packaging.

Through the CIREVALC Accelerator, the company analysed how its refillable technology aligns with upcoming EU environmental legislation.

The results were encouraging. The upcoming EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation is expected to significantly increase demand for refill systems in retail.

By anticipating regulatory developments, ReSpray has positioned itself to expand its technology across European markets.



Understanding future regulations can turn sustainability challenges into competitive advantages.

INSIGHTS FROM THE CIREVALC PILOTS

Across the participating countries, several common lessons emerged:

- Circular innovation often starts with small changes.**
Many companies already apply circular principles without formally recognising them.
- Expert mentoring helps structure sustainability efforts.**
External expertise can turn individual initiatives into a clear strategy.
- Circular solutions create new business opportunities.**
Companies often discover new products, markets or partnerships.
- Collaboration across value chains is essential.**
Circular economy requires cooperation between producers, suppliers and consumers.
- Community initiatives play an important role.**
Local projects can influence consumption patterns and raise awareness about sustainable practices.

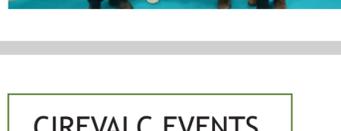
CIREVALC at SIRHA Budapest 2026

CIREVALC was presented at SIRHA Budapest 2026, one of the largest international trade fairs for the food and HoReCa sector in Central Europe. The event took place 3-5 March 2026 at the HUNGEXPO Budapest Congress and Exhibition Center (Hungary).

Within the Enterprise Europe Network B2B matchmaking event, participants had the opportunity to meet potential partners and discuss new collaboration opportunities. The on-site meetings were held on 3 March, followed by online B2B meetings on 4-5 March.

The project was represented in person by several partners, while others joined online, contributing to discussions and networking activities. The participation helped to raise awareness about the CIREVALC initiative and its mission to support the transition towards circular economy models in food, catering and packaging sectors.

Through direct dialogue with companies and stakeholders, partners shared insights on circular practices, opportunities for collaboration and the tools developed within the project.



CIREVALC EVENTS

Final Dissemination Event - Rzeszów

The CIREVALC Final Dissemination Event will take place on 22 April 2026 in Rzeszów, Poland, bringing together project partners, policymakers, businesses and circular economy stakeholders from across Central Europe.

The event will showcase the key achievements of the CIREVALC project and demonstrate how circular solutions can be accelerated in the food, catering and packaging sectors. Participants will learn about the CIREVALC roadmap, the Circular Community Accelerator, the online marketplace and other tools developed within the project, while also exploring opportunities for future cooperation.

The programme will feature presentations of regional circular initiatives, a discussion panel on national regulatory frameworks, and examples of good practices from companies implementing circular solutions. The event will conclude with a networking lunch, providing space for exchange and new partnerships.

On the same occasion, project partners will also meet in Rzeszów for a project meeting, reviewing the final results of the project and discussing future cooperation and follow-up activities beyond the CIREVALC project.

Join us on 22 April 2026 to discover how collaboration and innovation can accelerate circular transformation across Central Europe.

2nd CIREVALC Lab - Dresden

The 2nd CIREVALC Lab will take place on 16-17 March in Dresden, organised by RKW Sachsen.

CIREVALC Labs serve as interactive spaces where project partners and stakeholders can exchange knowledge, test ideas and develop practical solutions supporting circular economy models in regional value chains.

During the two-day workshop participants will:

- share experiences from the pilot implementation of the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator,
- discuss tools and support services for SMEs,
- explore opportunities for cross-regional cooperation and knowledge transfer.

The Lab will further strengthen collaboration between partners and contribute to the development of practical solutions helping companies transition to circular business models.

Discover the CIREVALC Platform: Mapping Tool and Online Marketplace

One of the key tools developed within the CIREVALC project is the CIREVALC Platform, which combines a mapping tool and an online marketplace to support circular collaboration between organisations.

The platform helps connect companies, organisations and experts interested in circular solutions in the food, catering and packaging sectors. It allows users to identify partners, explore regional initiatives and discover opportunities for cooperation across Central Europe.

The online marketplace enables companies to publish:

- Offers - circular products, services, technologies or expertise
- Needs - materials, partners, solutions or cooperation opportunities

By sharing these offers and needs, organisations can create new circular value chains, reduce waste and use resources more efficiently. The platform supports the broader CIREVALC goal of strengthening collaboration and accelerating the adoption of circular economy practices across regions.

Companies, innovators and organisations are warmly invited to join the platform and present their solutions.

Explore the platform and get involved: <https://cirevalc.ascrion.com/>

ABOUT THE CIREVALC PROJECT

CIREVALC aims to strengthen circular value chains in the food, catering and packaging sectors across Central Europe.

Through its Accelerator programmes, the project supports companies, organisations and communities in testing circular solutions, improving resource efficiency and developing sustainable business models.

The pilot activities presented in this newsletter demonstrate how circular economy principles can be applied in real business environments across the region.

