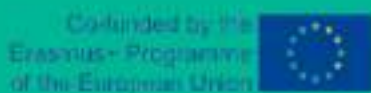




# You-Cycle Handbook

Engaging Youth in Circular Economy Entrepreneurship:  
Tips and Tricks from International Training Experiences



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# What is You-Cycle?



**Young Changemakers for Circular Local Economy (You-Cycle)** is a project financed by Erasmus+, through the Spanish National Agency INJUVE (Instituto de la Juventud de España).

It is implemented by the following organizations:

Espacio Geranios in Spain, EIG (European Integration Group) in Türkiye, EKO (Entrepreneurship and Social Economy Group) in Greece, IRCEM (Institute for Research in Circular Economy and Environment "Ernest Lupan") in Romania and YouthProaktiv in Belgium.

The goal of this handbook is to provide **actionable tips and tricks** to engage disadvantaged youth in circular economy entrepreneurial activities, drawing from our international training experience which took place in Athens, Greece in July of 2024.

# Understanding Circular Economy and Its Relevance to Youth

## What exactly is circular economy?

The circular economy is a production and consumption model that involves sharing, renting, reusing, repairing, refurbishing, and recycling existing materials and products as many times as possible to create added value. This helps to extend the lifespan of products.

In practice, it means **minimizing waste**. Once a product reaches the end of its useful life, its materials are recycled whenever possible, ensuring they remain within the economy. These recycled materials can be used repeatedly, generating additional value.

The circular economy is extremely relevant for youth as they are inheriting our planet and can help to create a more sustainable future. As climate anxiety grows, this offers a hopeful framework for taking meaningful action.

We invite you to explore with us tools that we have used throughout this project to explore these topics, encourage debate, creativity and innovation to address one of the main issues of our time.



**WATCH:** One of the best tools we have found for explaining the Circular Economy with youth is this video by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation - [Explaining the Circular Economy and How Society Can Re-think Progress | Animated Video Essay](#)

# Activity 1: Circular v. Linear Economy

**OBJECTIVE:** Learning about circular economy and the differences with linear economy.

**DURATION:** 1 hour

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (aged 18-30)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25

## ✓ Learning outcomes

- Learning about the circular economy and the difference with the linear one
- Hands on exploration of the differences between linear and circular economy, and how the economy's type can affect the environment.
- Understanding the concept and principles of upcycling
- Promotion of a deeper connection to sustainable practices
- Enhanced creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking skills.

## ✓ Materials

- Hierarchy Waste Template
- Pens



# Circular v. Linear Economy

## ✓ Description & Instructions

Short introduction to the circular economy (A game “what comes to your mind when you hear circular economy?”). Everyone will be asked to write a word or draw something on sticky notes that comes to their minds when they hear about the circular economy and then will have an open discussion. (10 min)

A short quiz about linear and circular economy (10 min)

Sample questions can be found [here](#).

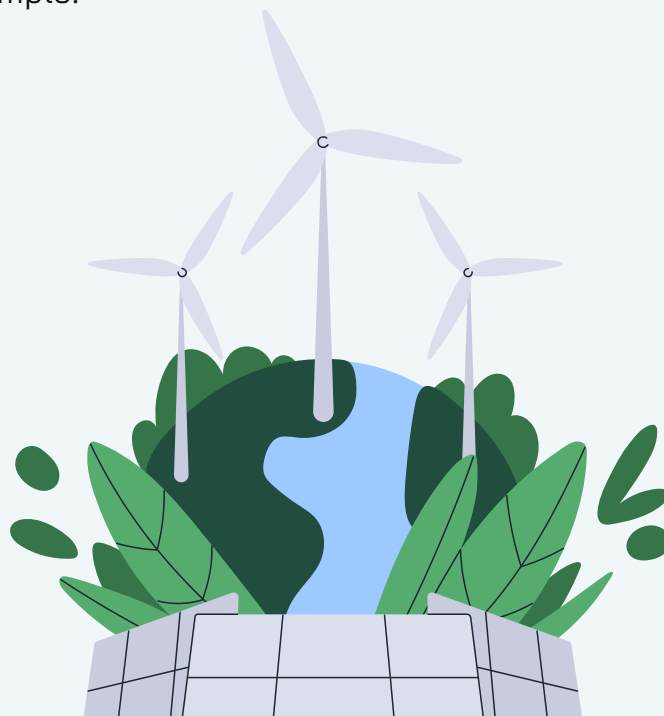
The participants will be divided into small groups, each group will draw or write on the blank sheet the production phases of one product in the context of the circular economy and linear economy.

(For instance, food, clothes, cardboard, electronics, etc.) (30 min)

Each group will present the results (10 min)

## ✓ Debriefing

- What do you think of this exercise?
- Did this exercise help you clarify the main differences between linear and circular economy?
- Do you think that many products can be produced in a circular way? If yes give an example.





# Activity 2: Circular Economy in everyday life

**OBJECTIVE:** Exploring new applications of circular economy in everyday life.

**DURATION:** 1 hour 15 min.

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (aged 18-30)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25

## ✓ Learning outcomes

- Encouraging creativity and exploring skills
- Supporting recycling skills with different materials
- Learn how great an impact small actions can have
- Learn about the waste hierarchy in the circular economy guide of the EU

## ✓ Materials

- Blank sheets
- Painting supplies
- Projector and laptop



# Circular Economy in everyday life

## Activity

### ✓ Description & Instructions

In divided teams, the participants will be given time to search everyday practices that make a house sustainable (15 min)

Short presentation about the waste hierarchy. (10 min)

Then, each team will be given an example of an item that could go through the waste hierarchy template (Avoid, Reuse, Recycle, Recover) (for example, plastic bottles and paper) The goal is for them to identify how to improve the circularity of the product. (30 min)

The teams will present the results and discuss with the larger group. (20 min)

### ✓ Debriefing

- Does this activity help you find new ways and ideas for recycling items we use in everyday life?
- Did you know any of the waste hierarchy elements before?
- Do you think that minor actions can leave a great impact on your community?
- Which item from the ones you worked on did you consider more challenging?

### ✓ Source:

A Guide to implement circular economy in your everyday life







# Activity 3: Circular City Simulation

**OBJECTIVE:** Fostering new strategies and ideas to move to more sustainable cities.

**DURATION:** 1 hour

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (aged 18-30)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25

## ✓ Learning outcomes

- Supporting planning and critical thinking skills
- Learning how to be in the decision makers' position who should take more sustainable choices
- Encouraging teamwork and cooperation skills

## ✓ Materials

- Sticky notes
- A map of hypothetical or real city
- Pens and pins



# Circular City Simulation

## ✓ Description & Instructions

### **Introduction (5 min)**

Facilitator will give a clear overview of the activity, its objectives, and the expected outcomes.

### **Formation of groups (5min)**

Assign a specific sector to focus on: transportation, waste management, energy, water management, housing and construction.

### **Brainstorming Session (10 min)**

Groups brainstorm strategies and solutions for integrating circular economy principles:

- For Transportation: Promote shared mobility, electric vehicles, bike-sharing systems.
- For Waste Management: Implement recycling programs, composting, zero-waste initiatives.
- For Energy: Utilize renewable energy sources, improve energy efficiency, create energy-sharing networks.
- For Water Management: Implement water recycling, rainwater harvesting, sustainable water usage.
- For Housing and Construction: Use sustainable materials, design buildings for disassembly, promote adaptive reuse.

Each participant will write his/ her idea on a separate sticky note for easy organization and later use.

### **City Mapping (20 min)**

Provide each group with a printed map of a hypothetical or real city. Each group will place sticky notes with their ideas on relevant areas of the map and identify specific locations where proposed solutions can be implemented:

- For example, where to place recycling centers, renewable energy installations, bike lanes, etc. Consider key stakeholders (e.g., local government, businesses, communities) involved in implementation.

Each team will put the sticky notes on a big shared map (In case of having two different ideas from two different teams on the same place on the map, they have to agree together which has the priority to be put on that place).

# Circular City Simulation Activity

## Presentation and discussion (20 min)

A representative from each group will present the map to other groups and will be involved in discussion and receive feedback from other groups (4 min for each group)

### ✓ Debriefing

- What was the hardest part to handle in this process?
- If you were a decision maker, what would be the first sustainable project you would start implementing in your city?
- In the context of the project you implemented with your team, how could we- as citizens- help flourish sustainable projects that are implemented by the government?

### ✓ Maps links' examples:

1. <https://www.shutterstock.com/el/image-vector/my-city-track-maps-illustration-kids-2246629355>
2. <https://www.shutterstock.com/el/image-vector/city-navigation-map-flat-plan-streets-1562509468>
3. <https://www.edrawsoft.com/templates/pdf/location-map.pdf>
4. <https://www.edrawsoft.com/templates/pdf/city-street-map.pdf>
5. <https://www.edrawsoft.com/templates/pdf/street-map.pdf>



# Activity 4: Design Thinking Process in Social Entrepreneurship (Circular Economy)

**OBJECTIVE:** To get an overview idea about the design thinking process

**DURATION:** 15 - 20 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30 y.o)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25 (five teams)

## Day 1, Part 1

### ✓ Learning Outcomes

- Understand the design thinking process.
- How to apply each step of the process.
- Learn about examples from Stanford University (Embrace Warmer).

### ✓ Materials

- [Presentation slides](#)

# Design Thinking Process in Social Entrepreneurship (Circular Economy)

## Description & Instructions

During 15- 20 minutes, the participants will learn about the design thinking process and its phases that can be applied to design their own businesses.

## Debriefing

The following questions will help participants to explore and organise their feelings and thoughts and provide constructive feedback on the session:

- How did this session make you feel?
- Was every phase/ step of the design thinking process clear and easy to handle?
- Do you find that the design thinking process can be applied to all life aspects?

# Activity 5: Design Thinking - Developing an Empathy Map

**OBJECTIVE:** Learn how to create an **empathy map** of the user persona

**DURATION:** 25 - 30 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30 y.o)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25 (five teams)

## Day 1, Part 2

### ✓ Learning Outcomes

- Empathizing with the users or customers to find out their real problems and needs.
- Have an idea about the empathy map and its categories.
- Learn how to extract the main goal of the user from the empathy map's categories.

### ✓ Materials

- Sticky notes
- Large papers to draw empathy map or printed versions (see above presentation.)
- Pens

### ✓ Description

This activity could take more time, since we don't have that much time to apply it in real life, we provide the participants with some user persona examples- fictional person that is created for the purpose of the business- and they complete the empathy map of this user. At the beginning the participants get an idea about the categories of the empathy map that they are required to fill out. Then:

# Design Thinking: Developing an Empathy Map

- Everyone in the group writes something to be put in the empathy map on a sticky note (5')
- The team members fill out a template of the empathy map with their answers and discuss together their answers and set a goal for that user in the middle of the empathy map. (10')
- At the end of this activity, the participants will have the time to present their target personas (10' - 15')

## Debriefing

The following questions will help participants to explore and organise their feelings and thoughts and provide constructive feedback on the session:

- What do you think about filling the categories of the empathy map? Was it easy or challenging?
- What do you think about the duration of that activity? Was the time given enough or not?
- Did this activity help you get a more clear idea of the target persona and develop it more easily?

# Activity 6: Design Thinking - Identifying the challenge + hypothesis

**OBJECTIVE:** Learn how to define the real problem and need of the user from the empathy map that was designed in the last phase.

**DURATION:** 15 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30 y.o)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25 (five teams)

## Day 1, Part 3

### ✓ Learning Outcomes

- Define the real challenge and need of the user precisely.
- Get an idea about other tools that used to come up with more precise definitions of the challenge and need
- Set the statement (The user... needs... because ...)

### ✓ Materials

- Papers
- Pens.



# Design Thinking - Identifying the challenge + hypothesis

## Description & Instructions

Based on the empathy map the participants created in the last phase, in this activity the teams will be asked to:

Define two things in a very precise way:

- They have to set two statements ( 5'  
(The user..... needs..... because....)  
(How might we help the user ... to ....)
- The participants will have the time to present their statements (5'- 10')

## Debriefing

The following questions will help participants to explore and organise their feelings and thoughts and provide constructive feedback on the session:

- Did this activity help you define the problem and the need precisely?
- To what extent did this activity help you understand your user/ customer?



# Activity 7: Design Thinking - Ideate Activity (Crazy Eights)

**OBJECTIVE:** The solution creation for the problem and need that was defined in the previous phase.

**DURATION:** 50 min - 1 hour

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30 y.o)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25 (five teams)

## ✓ Learning Outcomes

- Encouraging creativity in finding solutions for the challenges in limited time.
- Developing teamwork and cooperation skills to decide the best idea/ solution for the challenge.
- Impartiality in making decisions in the work environment.
- Trying to express the idea in a precise way.

## ✓ Materials

- A4 Papers
- Pens
- [Circular economy sheet template](#)

## ✓ Description

- Each participant gets A4 paper and divided into 8 parts to fill out it with 8 solutions to the challenge they want to address (8')
- Each participant should pick up one of their ideas and present it to the other team members (5')
- Then, each participant has another 5 minutes to elaborate his/ her idea in detail to present again to the team members. (10'- 15')

# Design Thinking - Ideate Activity (Crazy Eights)

- The team members vote for one idea to create a prototype for it. The chosen idea is based on answering the questions of the [circular opportunities sheet](#). (15'- 20')
- At the end of the activity, each team shares the initial idea with other teams. (10')

## ✓ Debriefing

The following questions will help participants to explore and organise their feelings and thoughts and provide constructive feedback on the session:

- What do you think about the crazy eights' activity?
- Have you found any opportunity to combine two ideas together in your team?
- Was the activity's duration enough to elaborate an initial solution to the challenge you addressed?





# Activity 8: Design thinking process- Material Journey Mapping

**OBJECTIVE:** Get an overview on mapping the materials journey.

**DURATION:** 50 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30 y.o)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25 (five teams)

## Day 2, Part 1

### Material Journey Mapping Presentation

#### ✓ **Learning Outcomes**

- Learn about the journey of production materials template.
- Brainstorming to find out all production phases and materials needed in the material journey.

#### ✓ **Materials**

- The material journey mapping template
- Pens.

#### ✓ **Description**

After giving the participants, a brief about the material journey mapping template in 5- 10 minutes, the teams:

- fill out the material journey mapping template in 30 minutes.
- Then they have the time to share it with the other teams in 10 minutes (each group has from 2-3 minutes).



# Activity 9: Design Thinking Process - Prototype and Test

**OBJECTIVE:** Prototype creation of a solution to the challenge and test it.

**DURATION:** 50 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30 y.o)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25 (five teams)

## Day 2, Part 2



### Learning Outcomes

- Developing team working skills.
- Encouraging creativity by using simple materials to express ideas.
- Practicing to get and give a useful feedback.



### Materials

- 1.Laptop for teams that need to create a digital product or service
- 2.Markers
- 3.Colourful papers
- 4.Sticky notes
- 5.Pins and tapes
- 6.Pencils and pens
- 7.Glue



### Description

- Each group creates a prototype of the product or service they initiated using the materials provided to them (30')
- Each team presents the prototype and other teams test it and give their feedback. (10')
- Each group gets 5 minutes more to discuss the feedback and the final step is to present the final edition of the prototype. (10')

# Design Thinking Process - Prototype and Test

## ✔ Debriefing

The following questions will help participants to explore and organise their feelings and thoughts and provide constructive feedback on the session:

- What do you think about this exercise? Did you have all the necessary details to complete it?
- What do you think about the duration of the prototype creation? Was it enough?
- How much do you feel that you have benefited from the feedback of the participants from the other groups?
- Do you have any suggestions to make the implementation of this activity better?

## ✔ Link to all the materials:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CuvY1WFidfCdDCX4c9VXMQbewFIECGzF?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CuvY1WFidfCdDCX4c9VXMQbewFIECGzF?usp=drive_link)





# Activity 10: Debate Activity

**OBJECTIVE:** Realizing the similarities and differences between the traditional entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship

**DURATION:** 45 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30 y.o)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25 (five teams)

## ✓ Learning Outcomes

### 1. Introduction (5 min)

- Encouraging debate skills and how to build a strong argument to express ideas.
- Learning the principles of social entrepreneurship and correcting some stereotypes that might exist.

## ✓ Materials

- Projector and laptop

# Debate Activity

## Description & Instructions

The facilitator will present some debatable sentences ([see presentation](#)) about entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship and each participant will select one answer (yes or no or neutral) and each group of people based on their answer will present some arguments to select their answer.

### **Sample questions:**

- Social entrepreneurship is more effective than traditional entrepreneurship in creating sustainable economic development.
- Traditional entrepreneurship drives innovation more effectively than social entrepreneurship.
- Social entrepreneurship sacrifices profitability for social impact, making their ventures less viable in the long run compared to traditional entrepreneurs.
- Traditional entrepreneurs contribute more significantly to job creation than social entrepreneurs.
- The primary goal of social entrepreneurship should be to address social issues, even if it compromises financial returns.
- Traditional entrepreneurship, focused on profit maximization, inherently neglects social and environmental responsibilities.
- Government policies should prioritize supporting social entrepreneurs over traditional entrepreneurs to address societal challenges.

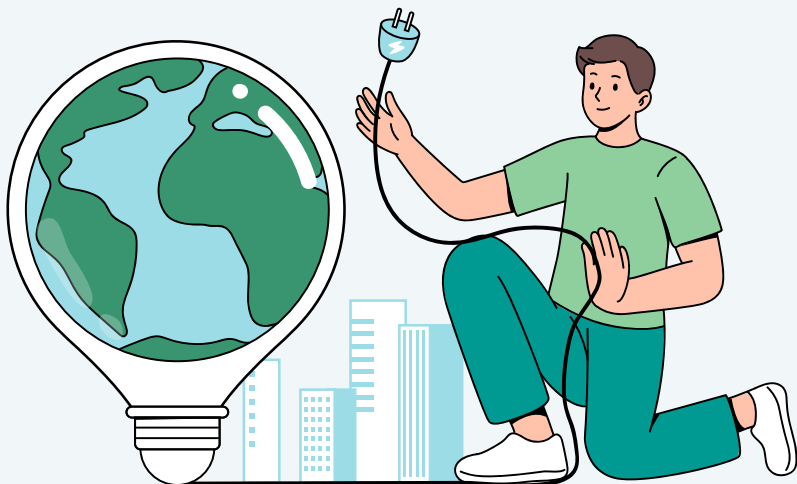


# Debate Activity

- Social entrepreneurship is a trend that will not have a lasting impact on the global business landscape.
- Traditional entrepreneurship models are more adaptable and resilient in the face of economic downturns compared to social entrepreneurship models
- The success metrics for social entrepreneurs should differ from those of traditional entrepreneurs, focusing more on social impact than financial performance.

## Debriefing

- Did you realize the similarities between entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship before taking part in this activity?
- Did this activity help you enrich your knowledge on this subject?
- Did this debate help you explore new thoughts and ideas about entrepreneurship in general?





# Activity 11: Dixit Activity

**OBJECTIVE:** Expressing feelings towards social problems.

**DURATION:** 30 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25

## ✓ Learning Outcomes

- Encouraging participants to share thoughts and feelings towards everyday social “green” challenges that they may face.

## ✓ Materials

- Dixit cards

## ✓ Description

- In a circle, the participants will sit down and the facilitator will ask each participant about his/ her feeling about a specific social challenge, and the participant will pick up the card that expresses his/ her feeling.
- Small discussion can be opened based on the participants’ selections. (Why did you select this card?)
- Suggestions:

1. Climate change
2. Cutting down trees
3. Air pollution
4. Water shortage
5. Plastic waste
6. Loss of wildlife
7. Ocean acidification
8. Soil erosion
9. Overfishing
10. Garbage management



# Dixit Activity

11. City expansion
12. Nuclear waste
13. Acid rain
14. E-waste
15. Wetland loss
16. Resource depletion
17. High waste production
18. Overconsumption
19. Pollution from manufacturing
20. Landfill overflow
21. Single-use plastics
22. Energy inefficiency
23. Industrial emissions
24. Deforestation for raw materials
25. Water pollution
26. Toxic waste disposal
27. Loss of biodiversity
28. Greenhouse gas emissions
29. Soil contamination
30. Limited recycling
31. High carbon footprint

## **Debriefing**

- How did this exercise make you feel?
- Did you find it easy to express yourselves?
- Did you feel that you have been heard by the rest of the team?
- Do you feel more relieved after having heard other participants' concerns on the subject?
- Are you more optimistic or more pessimistic about taking action on saving the planet, after the completion of this activity?



# Activity 12: Four Types of Social Entrepreneurship

**OBJECTIVE:** Learning the four types of social entrepreneurship

**DURATION:** 30 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25

## Learning Outcomes

- Learn how to apply the types of social entrepreneurship in solving problems
- Encouraging the participants to generate different ideas and solutions in the context of these types of social entrepreneurship

## Materials

- Blank sheets
- Pens
- Projector and laptop

# Four Types of Social Entrepreneurship Activity

## ✓ Description & Instructions

- The facilitator will give a brief about each type of social entrepreneurship and will present one problem to the groups (5 min) [See presentation](#)
- The participants will be divided into 4 groups and will be assigned to solve the problem presented through a project that belongs to one of the four types (20 min)
- One representative from each group will present the solution that was selected. (5 min)

## ✓ Debriefing

- Do you feel this activity helped you enrich your knowledge and skills?
- Do you think that all social or environmental issues can be solved by all types of social entrepreneurship?





# Activity 13: Guessing Game

**OBJECTIVE:** Learn about the essential traits of the entrepreneur (5 Ps)

**DURATION:** 30 min

**TARGET GROUP:** Young people (18-30)

**NUM. OF PARTICIPANTS:** 25

## ✓ Learning Outcomes

- Exploring the five essential characteristics of the successful entrepreneur
- Encouraging critical thinking

## ✓ Materials

- Projector and laptop

## ✓ Description

- The participants will be divided into 5 groups and will be asked to think about 5 traits that start with “P” and are essential to the entrepreneur (15 min)
- Then, each group will present the 5 traits they developed and will see how many traits they got from the actual Ps we have (5)
- The facilitator will give a short brief about the Ps (passion, purpose, planning, patience, perseverance) and will discuss them with the participants (10 min) [See presentation.](#)

## ✓ Debriefing

- How many traits did you think of?
- Were any of them that you haven’t thought would be necessary and helpful for the entrepreneurial mentality?
- Are there any you think need to develop personally?



# Conclusions

As a way to complement this training proposal, we also encourage you to investigate best practices in your area. During our international training, the participants had the opportunity to visit local small businesses in Athens such as: **'Kyklo slow living & zero Waste'** and **'Threads of Hope Hellas'** which are active in circular economy and/or social entrepreneurship. The participants gained insights into the operational mechanisms of these companies and into ways of achieving economic sustainability.

This type of training not only provides knowledge and skills, but also nurtures a sense of bonding and shared objectives among the participants and constitutes an inspiring and empowering journey, motivating participants to pursue their vocations in a creative and more sustainable way.

This training offers participants fresh insights, skills and inspiration to make a positive impact in their communities. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all those involved, participants, organizers and trainers who made this training a great experience. We hope that this handbook helps you as well on your circular economy journey!



# Our partnership

We invite you to reach out to our consortium partners if you have any questions or are interested in implementing this type of training in your communities. We would be happy to offer our support and insights!

Organization	Website	Email
Eko Greece	<a href="http://ekogreece.com">ekogreece.com</a>	info@ekogreece.com
European Integration Group	<a href="http://eig.ist">eig.ist</a>	info@eig.ist
IRCEM	<a href="http://ircem.ro">ircem.ro</a>	office@ircem.ro
Youth Proaktiv	<a href="http://youthproaktiv.org">youthproaktiv.org</a>	pallares@youthproaktiv.org
Espacio Geranios	<a href="http://espaciogeranios.com">espaciogeranios.com</a>	erika@espaciogeranios.com