



**10th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy of Baltic Sea Region
12-13th of June, 2019
Gdańsk, Poland**

SUMMARY REPORT

Seminar: “Circular economy and health: it’s mainly good news”

Time: 12 June 2019, 15:15 - 16:45

The seminar was organised by the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS) Secretariat/the Policy Area ‘Health’ with the aim to explore which impact the implementation of circular economy can have on health and social well-being of citizens. The seminar and its discussions were led by **Dr. Valery Chernyavsky**, Head of Unit, Federal Research Institute for Health Organisation and Informatics of the Russian Federation.

Ms. Ülla-Karin Nurm, Director of the NDPHS Secretariat, set the scene for the seminar by asking: “What is the end goal of connecting the region, saving the sea and improving prosperity, if we do not talk about the impact of the strategic actions on health and well-being of the citizens of the Baltic Sea countries?” She highlighted that a linear economy can lead to a vicious circle of humans polluting air, water and land, therefore, creating an environment that is detrimental to human health. Furthermore, Ms. Nurm emphasized that health determinants lie outside of the health sector and there is a need for cross-sectorial cooperation to address the impact of environmental factors on human health in the Baltic Sea Region.

Ms. Maxi Nachtigall, Senior Policy Officer at the Swedish Environment Protection Agency and Policy Area Coordinator for PA “Hazards” focussed her presentation on the impact of hazardous substances that end up in the in the environment on human health. She illustrated how each of us plays a role in releasing various substances to the wastewater. Even though BSR countries are generally good at filtering waste water, the sludge from water treatment plants that is used in agriculture as fertilizer can contain micro pollutants, heavy metals, plastics, nanomaterial, antimicrobials or antimicrobial-resistant bacteria. Ms. Nachtigall concluded by calling for increasing the awareness and developing safer ways of nutrient recycling for the benefit of sustainable environment and human health.

Ms. Alexandra Davidsson, Secretary General of the Swedish Association of Responsible Consumption (Medveten Konsumtion), highlighted the urgency of rethinking our unsustainable consumption patterns by illustrating the severe burden our daily purchasing choices create for the planet. We are currently using 70% more resources than the earth can cope with and are therefore far from reaching the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”. As an example of how to make consumers realise their responsibility and encourage them to rethink, she has introduced the initiative “White Monday” (<https://www.whitemonday.info>), which promotes circular economy initiatives on the Monday before “Black Friday”.



Ms. Elis Joudalova, Oljo Market Growth specialist, Channel Islands Food Waste Consultant, focussed on the impact of food and food waste and its public health and environmental implications. The app OLIO allows people and businesses to connect with each other to allow for sharing of food that would otherwise be thrown away. Ms. Joudalova highlighted that this redistribution of food unlocks its economic, environmental, nutritional, social and moral value.

Ms. Dorota Napierska, Chemicals Policy and Projects Officer, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe presented the important role of circular economy in the healthcare sector, and the pressing need to make healthcare facilities „greener and healthier“. HCWH works on five main topics in this regard: reduce human and environmental exposure to toxic chemicals in healthcare, decarbonisation of the European healthcare sector and increased climate advocacy by healthcare leaders, increased sustainability of food production and consumption in European healthcare, reduced pharmaceuticals presence in the environment, and leverage healthcare’s purchasing and investment power to accelerate the transition to circular economy.

Ms. Kaidi Kaaret, Junior Expert, Sustainable Development Programme, Stockholm Environment Institute Tallinn, focussed on the health benefits of circular economy that can be created by a reduction of air pollution due to less manufacturing. This would be particularly beneficial for residents of urban areas. It is estimated that by 2050, 70% of the population will live in cities, with cities producing 2.2 billion tonnes of waste annually. Ms. Kaaret also stressed the need for optimizing agricultural practices and shifting towards more conscious and sustainable consumer practices.

The presentations were followed by a lively discussion with the audience adding several important aspects to the topic, such as:

- All initiatives that are aimed to improve health, for example the creation of green spaces in cities, need to be inclusive and accessible for everyone.
- Business models that promote circular or sharing economy, such as the OLIO app, should be economically sustainable.
- Circular economy principles should also be implemented in urban spatial planning, for example through renovating old buildings instead of building new ones, where possible, using non-toxic materials, etc.

Dr. Chernyavsky concluded and summed up the discussions, stressing that circular economy can only be implemented through a bottom-up approach, through cooperation amongst neighbours and within communities as well as through cooperation between different sectors. With this joint effort we can all contribute to realising the health benefits that can be gained through principles of circular and sharing economy.

