OBEC

INSPIRING REVOLUTIONARY EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIALS

Module 9

ABOUT THE PROJECT

OBEC (2020-1-SE01-KA204-077803) is a KA2 Strategic Partnership co-funded by the Erasmus+ of the European Union. Led by SwIdeas in Sweden, the project gathers partners in Croatia (Regional Develpment Agency of Sisak-Moslavina County - SIMORA), Italy (LAI-MOMO Società Cooperativa Sociale & Università degli studi di Urbino Carlo Bo), Belgium (EURADA - Association Europeenne Des Agences Developpement).

OBEC is an innovative project that aims to explore the potentials of Blockchain technology to promote competency development and recognition of skills and qualifications by creating an innovative system to issue and validate learning credentials on a trial basis. Through this effort, the project's goal is to encourage the professional and academic integration of migrants, exchange students, and individuals with informal and non-formal learning backgrounds.

By contributing to the educational and economic integration of these targeted groups, OBEC envisions to benefit individuals with migrant background, students, teachers, education institutions, and employers. Focusing on the key issue of lack of uniformity and transparency in systems of validation of credentials, it is expected that this effort will result in positive effects in the working context, promoting employability, empowerment, and accessibility to the labour market.

Handouts

Case study – Ecocheques, Belgium

Ecocheques are a popular initiative of the Belgian Labour Council which private companies in Belgium can use as a form of payment for their staff.

The difference between them and normal pay is that ecocheques are untaxable and can only be spent on selected environmentally friendly products and services.

Employers can give each employee ecocheques worth up to €250 per year, valid for up to 2 years. The cheques themselves are not physical, paper vouchers; they come in the form of credit loaded onto a payments card.

Since 2009, ecocheques have allowed consumers to choose from a long list of things payable with ecocheques, including (but not limited to):

- Second-hand electrical products

- Recycled products

- Products made from recycled/salvaged materials

- Repair services

- Bicycles, scooters (manual and electric)

- A diverse range of other sustainable products and services.

Value proposition:

Ecocheques count as an untaxable bonus. This gives an incentive to both employer and employee. By diverting €250 a year into ecocheques, both employer and employee get to keep money which would otherwise have been paid in tax.

In this sense they work as a kind of indirect government subsidy for environmentally friendly goods and services. They also create more consumer demand for them, giving these things an advantage over less sustainable alternatives.

What makes it circular?

Solution: Ecocheques are circular in terms of **product life extension** (repair services), **resource recovery** (recycled products), and **circular inputs** (products made of well-sourced, biodegradable/recyclable materials) by incentivising the purchase of a broad range of eco-friendly products and services.

Environmental and economic impact:

- The year 2019 saw **€256 million** issued in ecocheques by **80 000 companies** to **1.85 million members of staff**.

- Use of ecocheques in 2019 is estimated to have led to savings in CO_2 emissions equal to the **yearly emissions of 22 573 Belgians**, or **0.23% of the national total**

- **41%** of ecocheques are spent in **local shops**, **49%** in **specialist businesses**, and only10% in supermarkets.

- Ecocheques have the effect of **channeling consumer spending** to ecological and sustainable companies and sectors. This in turn **creates profits and new jobs** in those green companies/sectors.

Questions:

1. **What makes the business model sustainable?**

2. **How is the economic impact of the business model related to its environmental impact?**

3. **How do you see this becoming applicable at a larger scale?**

Aspects of the circular business model	Benefits	Drawbacks
1.		

2.		
3.		

Case study – Recordarium, Spain

In 2019, 417,625 people died in Spain. An average of 1,144 deaths occur each day in Spain, a country with 47 million inhabitants (España - Mortalidad 2019, 2020). 41% of the population already chooses cremation these days, and this share is predicted to rise to 56% by 2025 ('Recordarium', el final ecológico, sostenible y legal para las cenizas de un ser querido, 2020)

This industry is quite polluting and its consequences are harmful to public health and the environment. The direct consequences are the production of greenhouse gases through the combustion of fossil fuels in funeral homes, crematoriums, and other such facilities. Indirect effects, associated with the funeral home but physically occurring elsewhere, include: the wood used to make coffins, the chemicals used in thanatopraxy (body preservation), and the emissions associated with the management of other waste generated

Recordarium is just 30 minutes away from Madrid (Spain). It is a place dedicated to the memory of those who are not with us anymore. A natural environment made up of forests, vineyards, fields and lakes. It is a place where the ashes are used as biodegradable fertilizer for the trees, so that in each tree the positive memory survives and the cycle of life continues. It is a legal alternative to depositing the ashes in a natural and ecological way.

It helps reforestation, recuperation and maintenance of a natural environment by planting native trees and flora.

Recordarium is open to every person, respecting every belief. The families can decide their preferred type of ceremony, it being possible to play music, recount memories of the person's life, and share a video stream, among other services.

Value proposition:

Recordarium offers a legal and ecological alternative to say goodbye to those who have departed. The clients can choose either to bury the ashes in a biodegradable urn or directly spread the ashes in their favorite part of the facilities. It is a space in nature, a reforestation area, a garden for depositing the ashes of loved ones. It offers an eco-friendly way to become part of the circle of life. In addition, it decreases the amount of land being used for graveyards, which prevent that land being used for other purposes, and imposes no maintenance or land rental costs on the families of the deceased.

What makes it circular?

Solution: The main idea of Recordarium is to allow those who have passed away to return to nature by using their ashes as ecological fertiliser, promoting reforestation and flora maintenance.

The main building which Recordarium use on-site is intended to achieve 100% ecological efficiency and sustainability. They have opted for it to be a lightweight, modular construction without foundations or concrete, which therefore does not harm the environment.

The building has only one floor, so it does not cause visual contamination and integrates well with its environment as part of the landscape.

Environmental and economic impact:

- Use of renewable energy through photovoltaic and thermal solar panels. Aerothermal heating and cooling system.
- Natural supply of water from their own well, with water pumped up during the hours in which they produce energy in order to make maximum use of renewable energy. Wastewater evacuation with compact anaerobic purification.
- Contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's): SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth SDG 9: Industry, innovation and infrastructure SDG 12: Responsible consumption and production SDG 13: Climate action SDG 15: Life on land
- Ecological mission involving replanting local trees and plants.

Source

U-Eco (upcycling for more creative circular economy) Project Material – Case Studies.

Link: https://swideas.se/s/IO2-Case-studies_rev.pptx

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Case study – Recupel, Belgium

Recupel works all across Belgium to collect e-waste for various purposes.

They run collection points for electronic waste in public places such as shops, where anyone may drop off those products. Recupel also cooperates with producers, importers, and sellers of electronic devices on the Belgian market to facilitate the collection of the devices. Through Recupel, such companies can fulfill their legal requirement to ensure safe and environmentally friendly disposal of these products. By joining Recupel as a member and paying a membership fee, businesses ensure that this will instead be handled by Recupel.

For all household (i.e. non-company) appliances, a "Recupel contribution" is charged to the purchaser at the point of purchase, which covers the device's disposal costs for Recupel.

Recupel then either sends items to "reuse centres" to be put back into use, if still functional, or dismantles them to extract the raw materials for reprocessing and reuse if the device is no longer usable.

Value proposition:

- For **everyday consumers**: getting rid of devices, knowing they will not generate waste but will be repurposed,
- For **companies producing**, importing, and selling electronic devices: saving a significant amount of work in having to dispose of electronic items bought for commercial purposes.
- Other services: informational service on what e-waste can be recycled
- if Recupel do not take it themselves, they point consumers in the direction of where they can go to get it recycled.

What makes it circular?

Solution: Recupel is circular because it facilitates **product life extension** in terms of the products it sends to re-use centres, as well as promoting **resource recovery** (recycled products) through the raw materials it extracts from non-reusable ones.

Environmental and economic impact:

- **Over 7 000 collection points** in use as of 2018.

- **122,548 tonnes** of electrical and electronic appliances collected in 2019

- **90% of e-waste** put to good use in 2019: **79.3%** is recycled, **10.7%** is incinerated, with the heat generated being recovered and used as an energy of heat source

- Result per material stream:

    o Ferrous materials: **99.99%**

    o Non-ferrous materials: **99.98%**

    o Plastics: **95.47%**

    o Other materials: **65.71%**

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Case study – Som Energia, Spain

Som Energia was born in 2010 in Catalonia, Spain. It is a consumer cooperative set up as a non-profit which produces and commercialises renewable energy. The company is committed to promoting a change in the current energy model to achieve a 100% renewable model. They also aim to make the whole process of energy consumption more participative in order to empower consumers.

What do they do?

Production: They produce electrical energy in generation facilities from renewable sources (sun, wind, biogas, biomass) financed by donations from partners.

Commercialisation: They manage, buy, and provide bills for the electricity consumed by their members, according to certificates of guarantee of origin. Individuals and companies can acquire energy from them without the need for any rewiring or electrician's services.

Value proposition:

 Som Energia offers an alternative to traditional energy suppliers not only by using 100% renewable energy, but also by involving the consumer through their participatory management set-up as a non-profit cooperative. Since its creation in 2012, Som Energia has become one of the best examples of the cooperativism in the energy sector in Spain.

What makes it circular?

Solution:

• Making the energy-consumption process accessible and participatory through local groups, aiming to create an innovative movement.

• Promotion of a green and efficient economic model in which citizens are key.

• Favouring the growth of a more social and solidarity-based economy.

• Reducing the market power of the major energy suppliers that have traditionally dominated the market

• Creating in a social movement that promotes transparency and change.

Environmental and economic impact:

- The cooperative started with 150 members. By 2020, this had already risen to 66 000 members receiving energy through 108 000 contracts.
- Transparent leadership and decision-making with participation of the consumers in the process. Decentralised into 53 local groups spread across Spain.
- Is seeing rapid growth in its provision of renewable energy. Provided 32% more energy in 2019 than in the previous year.

- Generation of green jobs such as for solar panel installers, green energy agents, and others. By the end of 2019 the company employed 73 people, with almost gender parity.

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