

2019 SWITCH-Asia LEADERSHIP ACADEMY ON CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Date: 2 - 6 December 2019
Tsinghua University, Beijing, China



Flash report

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Venue: Sino-Italy Environment and Energy-efficient Building (SIEEB), School of Environment, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China

On 2-6 December 2019, SWITCH-Asia RPAC organized its 2019 Leadership Academy on Circular Economy, in cooperation with School of Environment, Tsinghua University. 29 young and motivated participants representing the public and private sectors in 17 countries from North-East, South-East and South-East Asia, met in Beijing, China to discuss issues related to the circular economy and ways forward towards shifting to more sustainable practices.

Objectives

The main objectives of the Academy is to shift mindsets and inspire action towards a circular economy across young professionals in Asia; to increase knowledge and understanding of circular economy by future decision-makers; as well as to enhance a network of junior professionals across Asia in the field of circular economy and sustainable consumption and production (SCP).

Highlights

- The European Union (EU) Delegation to China, Tsinghua University and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) officially opened 2019 SWITCH-Asia Leadership Academy on Circular Economy. Ms. Feng Mei from the EU Delegation to China, reinforced the importance of SWITCH-Asia's role in promoting "a stronger and circular economy, helping businesses and consumers, as well as national and local authorities to drive the transformation towards sustainability". On a similar note, Mr. Tu Ruihe from UNEP China office, emphasised the important role of Asia and highlighted "circularity and development of a zero-waste economy are critical when working towards the achievement of SDG12".

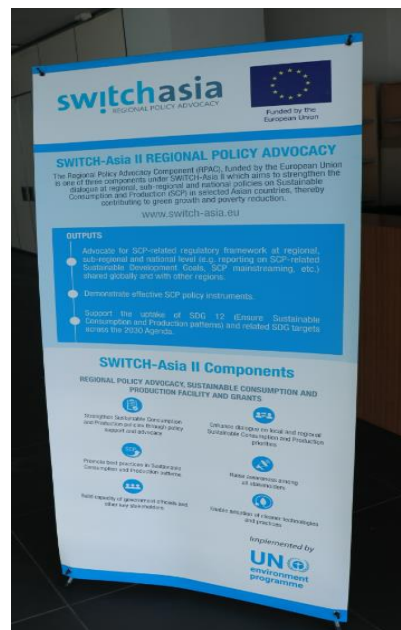
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- Through 5 days of interactive training, the participants of the 2019 Leadership Academy learned and engaged in active discussions on understanding major ongoing issues of circular economy. The aspects discussed during the Academy included policies, innovation and business models, technologies, financial instruments and how to influence behavioral change by communication.
- The first session of the Academy was focused on the presentation of the Global Environment Outlook (GEO 6 <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/global-environment-outlook-6>) results as a way to stress the importance of working towards a more CE in the region. During this session, lecturers from Tsinghua University who have participated in the elaboration of the GEO 6, presented the main messages of the report on the topics of: energy, food and waste & circularity, and their links to circular economy. The participants engaged in active discussions on understanding major ongoing issues in the region that could be solved through a circular economy approach. Ultimately, there was a general consensus that circular economy is fundamental to reach sustainability objectives and the Agenda 2030.
- The module 1 on the concept of Circular Economy, presented by Ellen MacArthur Foundation, brought the participants into the origin and details of the circular economy concept to understand its history and its nuances.
- For the module 2 on Policies of Circular Economy, the role of policies and regulation, Tsinghua University presented a case study of e-waste legislation development in China. Policy practices and features on Circular Economy in different cities in Europe and Asia were also shared during the session, which made the participants learned what urban policymakers can do to provide an enabling conditions for circular economy in cities to create a thriving, liveable, resilient world, in order to achieve circular economy.
- In the module 3 on Innovation and Business models, the participants learned about design and innovation is the key for the circular economy with a lot of cases study in Europe, through a series of group exercises moderated by Ellen MacArthur Foundation. The design thinking approach allowed the participants to explore new ways to create sustainable, resilient, long-lasting value in the circular economy.
- The module 4 on Technology and Business models was moderated by Tsinghua University and covered concepts and basic knowledge on industrial ecology, eco-industrial park and industrial symbiosis with the cases on eco-industrial park development globally. Participants learned the procedure for eco-industrial park, planning, implementation and nomination in China and discussed how to apply this procedure in their respective countries. The cases of clean energy development practices including biomass energy and wind power in China with regard to resource endowment, development strategy as well policy incentives were learned and discussed in this module.
- In the module 5 on Innovative Financial Instruments for CE, UNEP discussed with the participants different innovative finance concepts and presented as a good example the Switchers Fund, an initiative developed by SWITCH-med that provides and facilitates direct funding and business support services to existing and future green, circular and social entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean Region. The participants learned that financing partnerships are needed in order to promote circular economy.

- In the module 6 on Behavioral Change and Communication, the guidelines (https://www.switch-asia.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/RPSC/News/16June15SC/SC-Guide-For-Policymakers.pdf) related to behavior change developed by SWITCH-Asia I were shared with the participants. How to connect the concept of CE with the more tangible and immediate concerns of people’s lives, as well as the do’s and don’ts experience when communicating about circular economy were discussed during the session.
- In the module 7 on Indicators for Circular Economy Performance, participants were presented an indicator system that could be used for measuring circular economy performance.
- The field visit of the Academy was to the Beijing Economic - Technological Development Area (BDA), one pilot district on zero-waste in China. BDA, established in 1994, is a specific eco-industrial park which was well-designed and operated based on eco-industrial principle and is operating its zero-waste circular economy programme.
- It is highlighted that, the participants were divided into 5 groups and requested to develop a project at the end of the Academy. Through the whole week the participants were working in groups to develop a proposal for CE based on the inputs of the different sessions. The proposals were presented the last day covering solutions for hazardous waste, food waste, air pollution, kitchen design innovation with less food waste and e-waste, and food packaging alternatives. The participants managed to articulate well their ideas based on knowledge from the Academy and their professional background through project development.
- The SwitchOn platform (<https://www.switch-asia.eu/>) was launched during the Academy and is expected to contribute to build a network of young professionals working for Circular Economy.

SWITCH-Asia’s Visibility at the events

Digital Backdrop and Rollup banners



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