

Teaching Circular Economy at School: Finland's example

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Webinar

The Circular Economy and its contribution to
Green Entrepreneurship to achieve the
Sustainable Development Goals by 2030

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Introduction

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Main source Sitra website: <https://www.sitra.fi/en/projects/circular-economy-teaching-levels-education/>

1. Why choosing the example of Finland ?

Finland is now recognised as:

- ▶ An example in designing and implementing Circular Economy (CE) (See the World Economic Forum <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/06/transition-to-a-circular-economy-the-right-roadmap-can-help-sitra/>)
- ▶ A global frontrunner in CE learning offerings in higher education by the famous Ellen McArthur Foundation (<https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/>)
- ▶ The first country in the world to develop a circularity **roadmap**.

Recently, a new Circular Economy Action Plan has been set up as part of the European Green Deal (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1583933814386&uri=COM:2020:98:FIN>)

2. What is the circularity roadmap, who did it and how ?

- ▶ A circularity roadmap outlines the **stages** to be undertaken in a **holistic** fashion, to transition from a linear to a circular model.
- ▶ Designed by the **Finnish Innovation Fund SITRA**: An **independent** think-tank, which has a **neutral** position (Ref: Järvinen L and Sinervo R. How to create a national circular economy road map - A guide to making the change happen. SITRA P.1.)
- ▶ Participatory approach involving a range of stakeholders.

3. What are the key lessons of the Roadmap ?

- ▶ Take into account the **context**: no ready-made recipe or copy and paste!
- ▶ **Co-operation** is a requirement for progress
- ▶ **Education** is essential.

4. Teaching CE at School: An overview

2 paths:

- ▶ 1/working together with schools, while
- ▶ 2/developing sustainable everyday choices, such as a [lifestyle test](#) and the listing of [100 smart ways to live sustainably](#).

The whole education system involved in an initial project by Sitra (2017-2019) through:

- ▶ Direct negotiations with a few teaching organisations on teaching projects for primary and upper secondary schools, funded by Sitra.
- ▶ 3 funding application processes targeting universities and vocational schools.

25 educational packages were elaborated by schools (intellectual property rights) in a wide range of fields, including the arts, engineering sciences, business and design.

Resources for both **teachers** and **students**.

During the implementation phase, Sitra lobbied decision-makers, advertised the programme (lectures, presentations..) and trained diverse targets.

(For more information: <https://www.sitra.fi/en/articles/how-to-make-the-circular-economy-part-of-the-national-education-system-tips-from-finland/>)

5. What were the achievements?

- ▶ SITRA enabled networking and secured the commitment of experts, with a low level of bureaucracy.
- ▶ Over 70 000 children and young all around Finland studied the CE in 2018-2019. The project included 50 schools, universities, educational organisations and companies
- ▶ The CE teaching has established itself as a permanent part of teaching offered in Finland (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/06/transition-to-a-circular-economy-the-right-roadmap-can-help-sitra/>)

6. An illustration of teaching CE at school: Website



A simple example: learning to sort out waste at primary school.

7. What are the enabling conditions ?

- ▶ A small country
- ▶ Finland is one the most decentralised OECD countries
(<https://www.oecd.org/regional/regional-policy/profile-Finland.pdf>)
- ▶ A holistic roadmap comprising Technology Industries, Construction sector...
- ▶ Many associations and other organisations in society that promote CE skills and knowledge.
- ▶ A national positive mindset towards circularity
(<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/06/transition-to-a-circular-economy-the-right-roadmap-can-help-sitra/>)

What do Finns think about the circular economy?

88% of Finns believe they can play a role in advancing the circular economy.

82% of Finns believe that a circular economy will create new jobs in Finland.

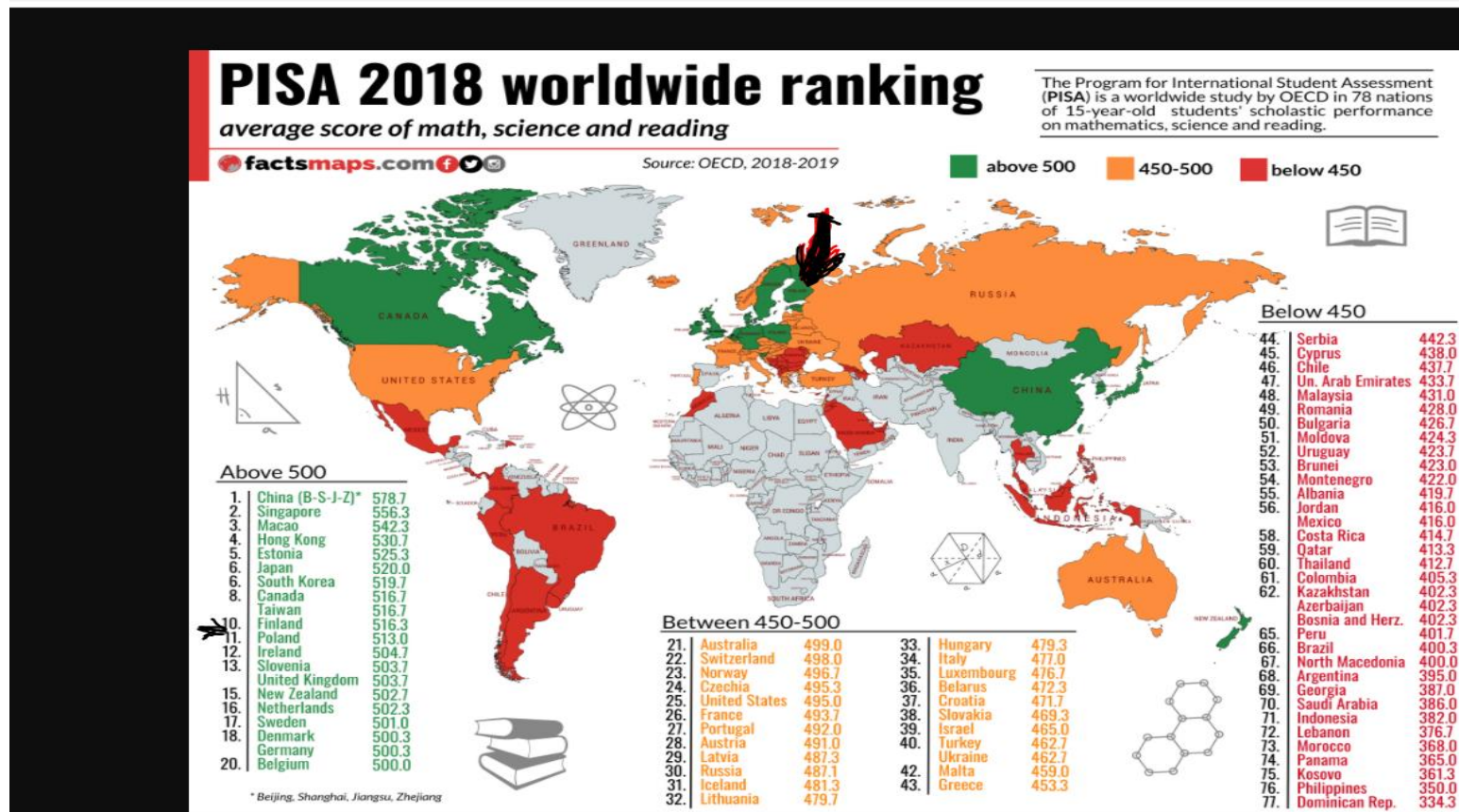
78% of Finns believe that Finland should transition to a circular economy even if other countries would not do so.

Source: Circular economy citizen survey, Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra, 2021.

7. What are the enabling conditions? (continued)

- ▶ An excellent education system: Finland is in the top ten of OECD's PISA

i2.wp.com/factsmaps.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/pisa-2018.png



8. What were the challenges ?

- ▶ For most of the developers: it was a shortage of expertise. The skills in and knowledge of CE issues were **weak** among teachers and stakeholders such as funders, public administrators, decision-makers and companies.
- ▶ Existing structures were challenging, and a new kind of **multidisciplinary co-operation** was not something that was inherently encouraged in schools.

9. Conclusion

- ▶ An overall strategy and a roadmap to advance the CE agenda are necessary.
- ▶ An organisation promoting CE education could be a ministry, a think tank or a funding provider. It is important that the organisation should not promote its own agenda. Instead, it should advance CE education at the national level.
- ▶ We need to learn from other experiences such as the Finnish one, while developing our own.
- ▶ A network is a good start to instil a change of mindset, promote CE and look for 'green' funds <https://www.greenclimate.fund/>. This is a long and complex process that requires co-operation and stamina.

Thank you for your kind attention!

For any comments/feedback:

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