C4T GROUNDWORK TA Factsheet

TA to Cugir, Romania

Figure 1: Romania and the Town of Cugir

The technical assistance (TA) to Cugir Municipality under C4T GROUNDWORK supported the transition towards a more circular and resource efficient waste management system, in a town of around 20,000 inhabitants, with a strong industrial legacy.

C4T GROUNDWORK, launched by the European Commission, DG REGIO, supports the implementation of sustainability transitions investments funded by ERDF and CF, under Policy Objective 2 (PO2) "A greener, low carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy".

C4T GROUNDWORK provides eligible regions with tailor-made capacity building and advisory support covering areas such as the energy transition, circular economy, water management, climate adaptation or biodiversity.

During 2024-2025, Cugir benefitted from investments in improved waste infrastructure under Romania's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP). These include 50 digital 'eco islands' for separate collection of 5 waste fractions and a new out-of-town integrated collection facility, soon to become operational. The latter will consolidate and replace Cugir's current 8 voluntary collection points for bulkier waste.

However, despite this new investment and awareness raising campaigns already carried out, Cugir's recycling performance remains well below the EU 2025 target. In 2024, only 26% of municipal waste was separated and recyclable - around half the EU target.

Cugir now aims to further improve its performance, first and foremost by reducing the total volume of municipal waste. In particular, the town intends to remove construction and demolition waste, as well as organic waste, from the residual stream as far as possible. By doing so, Cugir will effectively close local material loops, treating these high-volume waste streams locally as secondary raw materials. This will be accompanied by enhanced awareness-raising and education of the local population, with a view to significantly improving recycling rates.

Figure 2: (Left) One of Cugir's Voluntary Collection Points; (Right) New NRRP-financed consolidated Collection Point.

The overall objectives of the TA were to strengthen the operational and institutional capacity of Cugir to advance in the transition towards a circular and resource efficient economy, and to increase public awareness and citizen participation in selective collection. To deliver on these objectives, the TA was structured around three main activities.

ACTIVITY 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Under Activity 1, the TA team reviewed existing data, reports and strategies, assessed the waste management infrastructure, and conducted consultations with key stakeholders. This provided an overview of the specific needs of the municipality, both in terms of physical

waste management infrastructure and capacity building requirements. The completed needs assessment underpinned the subsequent design of capacity building actions and priority measures.

ACTIVITY 2: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STAFF OF CUGIR MUNICIPALITY AND POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Activity 2 focused on strengthening local capacity to plan and manage improved waste collection and circular economy initiatives. The TA team designed and delivered workshops for staff of Cugir Municipality, neighbouring municipalities and county-level waste authorities. These concentrated on project design for circular treatment of construction and demolition waste and organic waste, drawing on good practice from across the EU. The activity helped to establish a shared understanding among local actors of both the challenges and the opportunities associated with more circular waste management.

Figure 2: C4T expert and Cugir Municipality team members, during site visit Alba County waste treatment centre at Galda de Jos.

ACTIVITY 3: IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITY MEASURES

Activity 3 concerned the identification of priority measures for circularity. Its objective was to develop a short list of feasible measures to improve waste collection and promote circularity in Cugir, with a view to future external funding applications. Cugir also successfully applied to the EIB C3 Circular Cities advisory programme, an opportunity identified and initiated by the expert as a continuation of the TA.

OVERALL IMPACTS ON PO2 IMPLEMENTATION

Overall, the TA has helped Cugir develop its positioning as a potential catalyst for wider circular economy investments in Alba County and elsewhere in Romania. The recommendations deliberately left room for different territorial configurations and levels of ambition for each measure, recognising trade offs between complexity and cost. Concrete steps needed to implement each measure over the next 2 years were complemented by clear identification of the Cugir Municipality departments responsible for carrying them forward. The steps are outlined in the box below.

C4T GROUNDWORK

Priority measures on circularity for Cugir

The recommendations proposed for Cugir focus on a coherent package of 3 types of 'hard' and 'soft' priority measures to advance a local circular economy, as follows:

Development and implementation of investment projects:

1. **Centre for circular processing of construction/ demolition waste.**
   A potential (serviced) site has been identified.

2. **Biowaste composting centre Cugir.** Probably to be situated on the outskirts of the town, adjacent to the new NRRP-financed collection centre.

Multi-annual campaign, underpinning all other measures:

3. **Enhanced public awareness/education on separated waste collection in Cugir.** Directly addressing and involving citizens.

'Softer' type support available from EU institutions:

4. **Local circular economy strategy.** Within the framework of the EIB C3 Circular Cities Advisory (CCA) Programme – to begin after the end of the C4T TA.

5. **Circular economy learning from other EU cities.** Possible EUI City-to-City Exchange on similar challenges.

We are fully aware that waste management remains a significant challenge for the town of Cugir. However, we see this not only as a problem, but as an opportunity to transform our community. Our ambition is to become a circular city, where resources are used responsibly and waste is minimized. By strengthening separate collection and aligning our practices with European performance standards, we are committed to building a cleaner, more sustainable future for our citizens.

Adrian Teban, Mayor of Cugir

Photo: European Committee of the Regions

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