



LUPC and SUPC Joint Responsible Procurement event on 4 November 2020

Our first joint Responsible Procurement event with SUPC was held last week. It was great to have so many join us to hear from two organisations who live and breathe responsible practice: the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the University of Bristol.

The first session, focusing on the need for a circular economy that delivers better outcomes for people and the environment, was presented by Reniera O'Donnell, Higher Education Lead and Ilma Stankeviciute, Learning Designer at the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

Reniera O'Donnell began with a frightening fact: *If we don't change our ways by 2050, there will be more plastics than fish in the ocean.* Hence the need for society and businesses to move away from a linear model of "take, make, waste" whereby we take resources from the ground to make products, use them, and when we no longer want them, throw them away. This linear model must shift to a circular model with the following three principles: *design out waste, keep products and materials in use, and regenerate.* It is a new way to design, make and use things within planetary boundaries, enabling us to re-invent everything.

Higher education institutions are all on different journeys towards adopting this circular model, but they all have a key group of catalysts who can drive change: students. This group is so important as they can be mobilised to learn, think, and act differently to impact the linear system and act as agents of change.

We looked at the three principles of a circular economy and our speakers highlighted how some universities are already implementing change:

1. Design Out Waste and Pollution

By changing our mindset to view waste as a design flaw and harnessing new materials and technologies, we can ensure that waste and pollution are not created in the first place.

The **University of Bristol** is a great example - they changed the way they served food which resulted in less waste. They used data to help them design a system which significantly reduced food waste. As Reniera O'Donnell said: "Data plays a crucial part in transitioning to a circular economy."

Imperial College runs a student-led initiative where students bring in their own containers to buy essential groceries in order to reduce their use of plastics.

2. Keep Products and Materials in Use

By designing for durability, reuse, and recycling, we can keep products, components, and materials circulating in the economy and get maximum use out of them. We can share resources rather than procure them. As Reniera O'Donnell said: "sometimes sustainable procurement is about NOT procuring but about sharing pre-existing resources."

UCL recycle their laptops with [WARPIT](#) (the resource redistribution network), which has cut down 20 tonnes of supply chain CO2 and achieved savings in excess of £100k. They share their laptops with other universities and the Third Sector.

3. Regenerate Natural Systems

A circular economy avoids the use of non-renewable resources as well as preserving or enhancing renewable ones, for instance by returning valuable nutrients to the soil to support regeneration, or using renewable energy as opposed to relying on fossil fuels.

Roehampton University grows their own food, such as salad and vegetables, and therefore has a constant supply of food.

The **University of Bristol** worked with a local farm to manage farm waste.

Ellen MacArthur shared their [butterfly diagram](#) which explains how a circular economy works. The entire circular economy is underpinned by renewable energy.

The Ellen MacArthur Foundation shared the following tips to help universities move to a circular economy model:

- **The way universities use their purchasing power is vital** in the path towards a circular economy. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation has created the [Circular economy procurement framework](#), which is a checklist to help you think about your procurement activity. You can use it to make tactical and strategic decisions.
- **Find ways not to procure but share.** If you have to procure, put a circular angle on it. Keep thinking 're-use/re-purpose'
- **Break the silence with your teams.** Think about what you know about circular economy principals and what you need to know. Discuss and take action with your team.

In the second session we heard from Martin Wiles, Head of Sustainability and Rob Logan, Director of Procurement, both from the **University of Bristol**.

The University has made a lot of progress responding to the climate emergency and is very much leading the way: it was the first UK university to declare a climate emergency resulting in a big drive for change. With the University's actionable 8-point Climate Emergency Plan, the University of Bristol has put into place many measures and initiatives. This includes investing £10m in energy-efficient measures ensuring that less than 1% of the University's waste goes to landfill, with the bulk being

either reused, recycled or composted. They have also been buying renewable energy products and have reduced water consumption by 25%.

University of Bristol's students and staff are very engaged - this is important as they have fed into the development of the Climate Actions Plans (CAPs). Each school has its own CAP and responsibility for delivery lies with senior management. Procurement is a key part of delivering zero-carbon, as procurement accounted for 44% of the university's carbon footprint. According to Martin Wiles "If you are a procurement practitioner, you are also a sustainability practitioner"- the two go hand-in-hand.

Prior to Covid-19, travel/transport contributed a large amount of a University's carbon footprint. The University of Bristol's advice is to always use a Travel Management Company. Doing this will help universities evaluate their travel requirements and keep their carbon footprint as low as possible.

Since Covid-19, the University has re-evaluated its plan to tackle the climate emergency. Senior management remains committed, but business travel has come to a halt so automatically emissions caused by travel have reduced. The University is evaluating what it needs space for, for example, they may never again need a building solely for administration. The pandemic has given the University a chance to re-focus and reduce their emissions. COVID has taught the University of Bristol that resilience is key, and sustainability is a key measure of that resilience.

Marisol Bernal and Jayne Thorn, **LUPC** and **SUPC** Responsible Procurement Leads, gave an update on activity in their respective organisations as well as collaborative action being undertaken. There are dedicated sections on responsible procurement on both the [LUPC](#) and [SUPC](#) websites, which are updated regularly with resources, toolkits, guidance and case studies. Marisol reminded LUPC members that they have access to [Electronics Watch](#) guidance and resources on responsible procurement.

Jointly, LUPC and SUPC have developed several practical resources for you to use, including the Responsible Procurement Assessment Tool (RPAT). The RPAT is a shared process document for assessing risk during the procurement strategy stage, allowing positive and negative impacts to be highlighted or mitigated, at all stages of the process. In collaboration with NEUPC and NWUPC, we have also produced the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDG\) Tender and Call-Off questions](#) which will allow suppliers to report on what they have achieved and what they are committing to do in the future.

We will continue to make resources available to our members to use. This includes curating existing resources or creating our own such as a sustainability terminology document.

LUPC and SUPC are setting up a joint LUPC & SUPC Responsible Procurement Group (RPG), which will replace the respective regional responsible procurement groups. This will bring greater visibility to projects being undertaken throughout our combined membership by widening participation of the groups and strengthen relationships between members. Our focus will be to share best practice and help those interested by supporting the development of practical advice and guidance on important and relevant subjects. The first meeting will be in February.

The RPG is a group for you to engage with and use to help you as an organisation enhance your responsible procurement activity. Please continue to talk to us, give us feedback and tell us what you need from us so we can all work together in this vital area. We are committed to responsible

procurement, not only in our own practices but in helping you and the organisations in your supply chain.

This webinar was one of many events that we plan to hold jointly with SUPC to assist our members with their responsible procurement needs. We hope this webinar provided members with some food for thought as well as some concrete actions to take back to their organisations to embed responsible procurement into practice.

Please get in touch with [Marisol Bernal](#), LUPC Category Manager, Responsible Procurement if you have any questions.