

PH looks to Nordics for circular economy innovation, collaboration

Official representatives from the national government of the Philippines and the local government of Pasig City visited Sweden and Denmark for a week-long study visit on circular economy, organized by the Nordic Embassies in the Philippines, through the support of the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Nordic countries' embassies present in Manila are Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.

The visit provided an opportunity for delegates from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and City Government of Pasig to benchmark best practices from Nordic countries as global leaders in circularity.

Philippine Ambassador to Sweden H.E. Patrick Chuasoto hosted a dinner to welcome the delegation to Stockholm, highlighting the opportunities for Filipino stakeholders to learn from the Nordic countries' strong tradition of sustainability.

The delegates drew inspiration from Denmark's and Sweden's experiences on relevant key issues for the Philippine circular economy agenda such as extended producers' responsibility, deposit return system, and waste and wastewater management. This collective tradition for sustainable practices was well showcased at LOOP Forum where the delegates witnessed firsthand some of the most innovative technologies by Nordic companies, towards a circular economy. Some notable circular solutions are Envac's underground vacuum waste collection system, Scania's biogas fueled vehicles, and Recoma's PackWall which gives new life to discarded waste by turning them into construction boards.

The Philippine government representatives visited, among others, Amager Bakke (also known as Copenhill) which sustainably combines a waste-to-energy facility with a recreational skiing area in Denmark, the Sjöstadverket Water Innovation Centre in Stockholm, Sweden, one of the world's leading research and development facilities for wastewater management, and a reverse vending machine made by Norwegian company TOMRA where delegates returned beverage bottles and cans themselves at a local supermarket.

The study visit also presented the implementation of a circular economy at a local level through in-depth discussions and demonstration of installed technologies in Copenhagen and Stockholm particularly on efficient and smart waste collection systems.

Aside from deployment of state-of-the-art technologies, the Philippine delegation also took note of the successful model of cross-sectoral collaboration that drives not only innovation but also social behavioral change that is equally critical towards the achievement of a circular economy.

"The Nordic study visit showcased how innovation, policy, and community engagement seamlessly converge to drive sustainable urban transformation," according to the representatives from DOST.

For Pasig City, the more fundamental work of civic education, constant communication, social preparation, and institutionalization seen in the Nordic countries are only secondary to advanced technologies and capital-intensive infrastructure.

“Nothing is truly unaffordable if industries, civil society, and the academe have a unified vision of the common good, and are willing to invest in it,” highlighted by the representatives of Pasig City, who were impressed by the catalyzing role of non-profits supported by public-private partnership in Denmark and Sweden in terms of research and development, market sounding, data gathering, and monitoring and evaluation.

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