

Concept Note

Economy of Tomorrow (EoT) Fellowship for University Students and Young Researchers

2023 Theme: *Circular Economy: Chances, Challenges and Opportunities?*

1. Introduction to the Theme and Research Areas

The concept of circular economy is becoming popular while addressing climate change factors contributing to achieving sustainable development goals. Resources are limited; therefore, there must be a mechanism to make the maximum use of resources. Resources impact the economy, ecology, climate, lifestyle, culture, and overall living standard. Hence, a climate-friendly economy is indispensable for living and sustainable futures.

The concept of a circular economy is a closed and regenerative economic model aimed at using and reusing resources as long as possible. A linear economy operates on the principle of "take-make-dispose." This approach entails processing raw materials, transforming them into finished products, and distributing them to customers until they are accumulated as waste. This way, waste is getting piled up at every moment, which negatively impacts our environment and ecology. However, a circular economy is a process focused on reducing waste and continuous resource use. In short, this is a climate-friendly approach towards production.

Bangladesh is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Even though sufficient policy measures have yet to be taken to manage climate risks. For example, in Bangladesh the plastic industry is massively growing. However, there is a cost to the environment. Bangladesh recycles only 36% of plastic waste, and the remaining 64% is left to pollute the environment, especially the oceans.

After a decade of progressive economic growth, Bangladesh is now moving towards developing country status by 2026. With this progress, the country must compromise with the prevailing duty-free, quota-free market access to preferred markets. Undeniably, the future of exports will be challenging if measurements are not taken adequately to deal with this. The circular economy could be one of the sustainable economic models that can reduce resource gaps and increase sustainability in Bangladesh.

Developing countries like Bangladesh need to adopt a circular economy. Very few industries in Bangladesh have already started using circular production. However, that number is minimal. A vast number of industries need to maintain clean production, causing pollution and health issues. Also, a considerable portion of possible raw materials is turning into waste due to the need for a developed system. Being a developing country, Bangladesh is also progressing towards digitisation. The possibilities are undeniably vast when the potential of a circular economy is considered in Bangladesh. Apparel, leather, wood, plastic, and many other industries are exploring to introduce a circular

economy in their production system. Other than this formal sector, examples of circular economy are found in our traditional way of living.

In Bangladesh, the practices of a circular economy are rooted in the traditional lives and livelihoods of indigenous people including rural women. The use of old cloths (sari's) as the base material for making quilts and cow dung producing fertilisers and bio-gas (for cooking, heating and lighting) are few examples of circularity in the economy included informally.

This year FES¹ Bangladesh and Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka (CGS, DU) have set the theme of “Circular Economy: Chances, Challenges and Opportunities” to find our stand on it and to explore possibilities for the improvement of our economy as well as environment. Thus, FES Bangladesh and its partner invite potential candidates to consider the above issues and context and outline a short concept note/proposal to address them. The following guiding questions may be helpful.

- i. How a circular economy can contribute to slow down the degradation process of nature in Bangladesh?
- ii. How a circular economy can help Bangladesh to get access to the EU markets?
- iii. How a circular economy can create opportunities for the formal/informal economy?
- iv. What policy measures can be taken to introduce the concept of a circular economy in Bangladesh?
- v. How can a circular economy models play a vital role for the inclusion of unskilled labour force into the mainstream economy?
- vi. Which sectors have potential to run circular economy?
- vii. What can be learnt from indigenous communities that have been using circular economies?
- viii. Can a circular economy provide opportunities for marginalised communities?

2. What is the Economy of Tomorrow (EoT):

While enjoying strong growth but also exposing high vulnerabilities toward crises, Asian countries are taking centre-stage for power-struggle in global geopolitics in recent years. Bangladesh is one of the fastest growing economies in Asia which nevertheless will face challenges when it comes to transforming its economy to avoid the country from running into the “middle income trap” in the future.

Against this background, FES has designed the EoT model to conduct research cum dialogue between reform-minded economists/political scientists/etc. and young thinkers in Bangladesh in order to discuss new and innovative ways of economic development, which can be taken into consideration for dynamic growth, social balancing, ecological sustainability and gender equality of the country.

3. About FES Bangladesh and this Fellowship

Almost every year since 2015, FES, Bangladesh has been offering the Economy of Tomorrow (EoT) fellowship for university graduates and young researchers. From the beginning, FES has been engaging with university professors. They play a vital role as a part of the advisory committee throughout the fellowship process. But from last year, FES Bangladesh and CGS, DU have been jointly working to conduct this fellowship.

¹ FES is a non-profit German foundation which has more than hundred offices worldwide. The foundation owes its formation and its mission to the political legacy of its namesake Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected German President. The work of the foundation focuses on the core ideas and values of social democracy – freedom, justice and solidarity.

This fellowship programme is designed to encourage students and junior researchers to conduct research and to write a policy paper outlining concrete policy reforms for economic growth in a socially just, gender-equal, resilient and sustainable Bangladesh. The EoT Fellowship is an enabling platform for exchanging ideas on the current economic and social policy issues so that the fellows can jointly contribute to creating an inclusive and just society.

With this fellowship for students and young researchers in Bangladesh, FES Bangladesh and CGS, DU want to encourage the development of policy proposals and thereby enable the fellows to play a prominent role in the democratic and socially just transformation of Bangladesh.

3.1 Objective:

- To provide fellowship support to Bangladeshi students and young researchers in order to write a policy paper outlining concrete policy reforms looking at the futures of the economy of Bangladesh.
- To encourage students and young researchers to discuss the mentioned topics within the spirit of social democracy (freedom, justice and solidarity) and Just Transition.
- To provide possibilities to students and young researchers on diverse topics (this year on the importance of circular economy) and thereby develop a network of them in Bangladesh.

3.2 Eligible Candidates:

- Three categories of applicants are eligible for the Fellowship:
 - Students who already passed their Bachelor degree.
 - Students who already passed their Master's degree.
 - Early career researchers/teachers (up to three years of research experience).
- Maximum age limit of the applicants is 30.
- Bangladeshi students especially from the departments of Economics, Politics, International Relations, Sociology, Public Administration, Development Studies, Gender Studies, Environmental Studies and related subjects studied in Bangladesh or abroad.
- Early career researchers should have degrees from Bangladesh or abroad in the above subjects/disciplines.
- The students and researchers must be in Bangladesh during their fellowship
- Applications along with concept note/short proposal submitted by an individual or a group of individuals will be accepted for further review. Both the individual and groups are encouraged to apply.

3.3 Application Process:

- Eligible candidates have to respond to the "CGS-DU-FES EoT Fellowship Announcement" by submitting the filled-up application form within the deadline of submission. (see tentative timetable below)
- Each candidate must submit a concept note (see "description of concept note" in section 3.4).
- An "advisory committee" will be formed to assess the quality of concept note/proposal on the criteria set by CGS, DU and FES Bangladesh.

3.4 Description of Concept Note:

- The concept note has to be concise, short and a well-written document and should not be more than 3 pages.
- The concept note should have precise argument in line with the theme and guiding questions of the fellowship.
- The concept note should contain the research methodology to be used in the study.
- The concept note should be computer-composed in A4 page, font size 12 in Calibri or Arial. 1.5 lines space.

- The concept note should include a time-line.
- The concept note should be in English
- Proper citation and referencing should be done to avoid any kind of plagiarism

3.5 Advisory Committee:

- Three members Advisory Committee will be formed, consisting of two academics from the University of Dhaka, one staff member from FES Bangladesh.
- The Advisors will be involved throughout the whole process beginning from the selection of the Fellows to the final Seminar.
- During the process of final selection, the committee will meet.

3.6 Selection:

- All the applications along with proposals submitted within the deadline will be reviewed by the Advisors.
- A shortlist of the candidates will be made after first primary review by the advisors.
- The shortlisted candidates will be asked to take part in an interview. The interview may take place online or in-person.
- The shortlisted candidates will have to give a short presentation based on the concept note/proposal they submitted. (5-10 mins maximum)
- Final selection will be made on disciplines, quality and diversity of concepts, gender representation (male, female and gender-diverse), geographic locations of the universities (Dhaka and outside Dhaka), category of universities (public and private) and responses in the interviews.
- Applications received from people with diverse gender identities, differently-abled groups, ethnic communities and religious minorities will be treated with special consideration to promote diversity in the cohort of the fellowships.

3.8 Process:

- After selection of the fellows, their concept notes/proposals will be finalised in the first meeting plus 2-day orientation. This meeting is the first step to build a network and will allow the organisers to present the general EoT ideas and to bring students and experts of the advisory committee together. The fellows will also have the possibility to share their project ideas with other fellows and will get first feedback from the advisors. And the orientation will focus on:
 - To develop the research questions and methodology in line with the overall objective of the Fellowship
 - To guide the Fellows on how to write policy papers
- The Awardees will submit their progress reports in a short form on monthly basis to FES Bangladesh.
- The fellows can share their progress of the studies in the second meeting and will receive feedback from advisors.
- After 4 months, the fellows will hand in their drafts to the advisors and FES Bangladesh.
- The drafts submitted by the fellows will be reviewed by the advisors for feedback/comments.
- The fellows will then have 2 weeks to incorporate the feedback and finalise their papers. The papers will be sent back to the advisory board.
- The fellows will present their studies at a jointly organised seminar by FES Bangladesh and CGS DU. They will receive feedback from the audiences and then incorporate those in their final papers.
- As a part of the Seminar, the final papers will be reviewed by two independent reviewers (Academics or Researchers) who will comment in the seminar.
- Selected papers will be considered for publications. The selection will be made based on quality.

The FES Bangladesh will coordinate the whole process.

3.9 Size and Language of the Report

- The Policy Paper must be concise, vivid, and short
- The Paper must be policy-oriented and must not exceed ten pages.
- The Paper must have a precise argument that builds upon the EoT project.
- The Policy paper should have specific policy recommendations.
- If the awardee has already been preparing an academic dissertation on the subject (this usual size is more than 20 pages), then s/he can take findings from the dissertation to prepare a ten-page policy paper for the submission to FES Bangladesh.
- Each policy paper should have 3/4 bullet points on the front page to get a summary of the paper.
- The paper must be written in English.

4. Dissemination of Ideas:

- FES Bangladesh will arrange a public seminar in Dhaka, when the Fellows have finalised their Policy Papers.
- Policy makers, academics, researchers, civil society representatives especially from and for marginalised communities, students, journalists will be invited to this Seminar.
- Each candidate will prepare a Policy Brief and a Presentation under the supervision of advisors of CGS-DU-FES Bangladesh.
- They will share their ideas with the policy makers and others, respond to the questions from the audiences, and receive feedback for any further improvements of the study.
- The research reports/findings may be used in different ways of FES communication nationally and internationally.

5. Number of Awards:

Maximum of 5 (Five).

6. Amount of each Award:

- Maximum Tk. 120,000 (One lac twenty thousand taka only)/each (excluding VAT & Tax).
- No additional costs for printing, photocopying, field research, etc. will be borne by CGS, DU or FES.
- FES Bangladesh will pay travel costs to attend the internal meetings, orientation and final seminars

7. Payment Schedules:

- On the day of contract signing: 40%
- On the day of submitting first draft: 30%
- After acceptance of the final paper: 30%

8. Timeline (tentative):

Tasks/Assignments	Tentative Dates
Fellowship Announcement	01 Feb 2023 (Wednesday)
Deadline for the Submission of Application	28 Feb 2023 (Tuesday)
Shortlisting of proposals	13 March 2023 (Monday)
Interview and initial presentation	19-23 March 2023 (Sun-Thursday)
Finalisation of the Awardees	23 March 2023 (Monday)

First meeting and Orientation on Concept note and signing the ToR	30 March 2023 (Thursday)
First Round of in-person sharing meeting between Fellows and Advisors	01 April to 15 May – 1.5 months (Minimum 02 in person sittings between the fellows and the advisors- one to one/group)
Send the draft version to FES Bangladesh	17 May 2023 (Wednesday)
Second meeting on primary findings and updates	18 May 2023 (Thursday)
Second Round of in-person sharing meeting between Fellows and Advisors	09 May to 10 July – 2 months (Minimum 03 in person sittings between the fellows and the advisors- one to one/group)
Draft submission to the Advisors and FES Bangladesh	13 July 2023 (Thursday)
Feedback on the Draft by the Advisors	23 July 2023 (Sunday)
Final Draft Submission by the fellows	27 July 2023 (Thursday)
Workshop on Presentation Skill	03 August 2023 (Thursday)
Final Presentation Submission	10 August 2023 (Thursday)
Public Seminar/Workshop in Dhaka	17 August 2023 (Thursday)

In the above timeline, the study period is set from 30 March 2023 to 17 August 2023. This time the Fellows will be mentored and supervised.

9. Relevant Resources:

- “Technology, Innovations and Work: Policy Options for Bangladesh”, https://bangladesh.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf-files/220105_Technology_Innovations_and_Work_EoT_Fellows_FES_Bangladesh.pdf
- Saxer, Marc (2013), “The Economy of Tomorrow How to Produce Socially Just, Resilient, and Green Dynamic Growth for a Good Society.” FES Germany. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/thailand/10000.pdf>
- News European Parliament, Circular economy: definition, importance and benefits, Date: 05 December 2022, Link: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20151201STO05603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits> , accessed on: 10.01.2023
- Altap Hossen, Circular economy: A potential pathway to a sustainable Bangladesh, Published in Daily Star, dated on 17 January 2023, <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/news/circular-economy-potential-pathway-sustainable-bangladesh-2045333>, accessed on: 10.01.2023
- Laboni Khatun and Dr Munjur-E-Moula, We should embrace the circular economy before it's too late, Published in The Business Standard, dated on 01 December 2022, link: <https://www.tbsnews.net/thoughts/we-should-embrace-circular-economy-its-too-late-542978> accessed on: 11.01.2023

10. Contact Point:

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