



European
Circular Economy
Stakeholder Platform

JANUARY 2023

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Fostering the circular
economy



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2022 ECESP IN NUMBERS

1,000,000
Pageviews

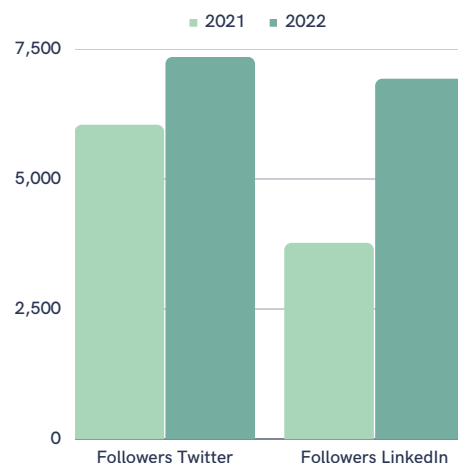
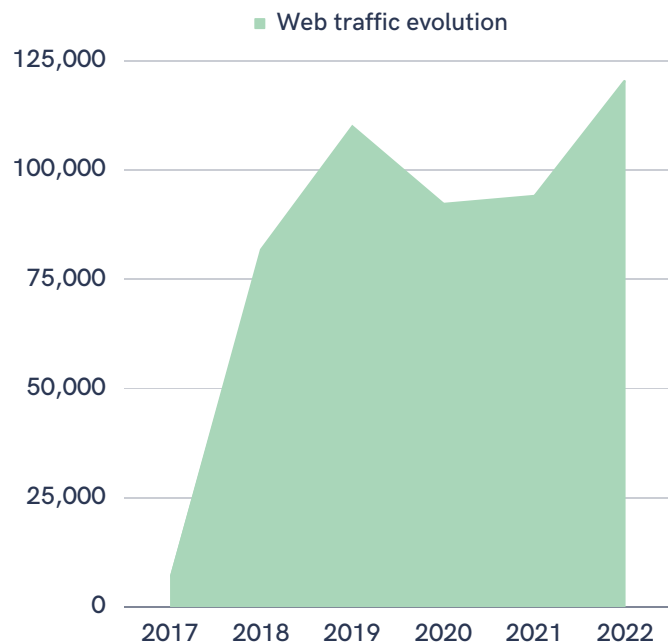
Key Successes



10 leadership groups



12 #EUCircularTalks
8 International Events



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform's Coordination Group wanted to make 2022 count for the circular economy, and they have lived up to their promise.

The Group is in the second half of its two-and-a-half year mandate and has strengthened the Platform's reputation and expertise in Europe and taken it beyond borders.

It is only logical that we look back positively on 2022. The year's first quarter started vibrantly with the Circular Europe Days during Dubai Expo Global Goals Week. The Coordination Group members organised eight events in five national pavilions to present the work done by the Leadership Groups in Europe in the field of the circular economy.

This event drew a lot of attention to the Platform, resulting in requests for collaboration from countries like India and Australia, which wanted to develop a structure similar to ECESP.

This highly successful international event was followed by the annual Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference, the ECESP's flagship event. Once again, the conference was online because of the current health measures.

The event was an opportunity to innovate the programme, both by organising it jointly with the French Presidency of the Council of the EU, and by the choice of technology for users: for the first time, ECESP used an immersive conferencing tool for participants and exhibitors.

After their first meeting in 2022, the Coordination Group selected ten new topics to develop in the Leadership Groups. The Group added new topics such as biodiversity and climate, digitalisation and social enterprises to reflect the subjects high on the political agenda.

The Leadership Groups used the #EUCircularTalks concept to discuss these topics with the circular economy community. The Platform took into account remarks and suggestions from previous participants and introduced an informal follow-up chat between the speakers and the audience. The idea is to create a space for spontaneous dialogue and debate among all those involved.

The EESC, represented by three members, and the European Commission, through DG ENV and DG RTD, have worked closely with the Coordination Group's Leadership Groups to keep the momentum going with the #EUCircularTalks.

The Platform was also present in international events like UNFCCC COP27, the UN Biodiversity Conference COP15 and the World Circular Economy Forum in Kigali.

The audience for the Platform's website and social media presence continues to grow. We have reached a million pageviews and are getting close to half a million visits. On social media, ECESP has over 7,000 followers on Twitter and over 6,000 followers on LinkedIn. Newsletter subscriptions are going up too, with more than 7,000 people receiving our monthly updates about the Platform.

Europe can consider the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform to be one of its success stories in fostering the circular economy. More than ever, the Platform's Coordination Group stands ready to bring forward European expertise from various sectors to help Europe reach the Green Deal's objectives of transforming the EU into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy that is leaving no one behind.

About the Platform

The European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP) is a joint initiative by the European Commission (EC) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The Platform is a European one-stop-shop for the circular economy community. It is a place for dialogue and a bridge between existing circular economy initiatives.

The EC and EESC established the Platform in 2017 to help accelerate Europe's circular economy transition.

ECESP supports businesses, civil society organisations and public authorities in accelerating the transition to a circular economy across Europe by fostering dialogue, sharing knowledge and expertise and exchanging good practices with a website, annual conference and regular activities such as thematic workshops and studies.



COORDINATION GROUP IN 2022

The ECESP Coordination Group (CG) consists of 24 leading organisations from a spectrum encompassing European businesses, environmental groups, national circular economy hubs, waste management, environmental research and recycling platforms, think tanks, research institutes and public authorities.

The Group pledged to make 2022 count for the circular economy, and they delivered. At their first meeting in 2022, the Group agreed on ten topics high on the political agenda to discuss in the Leadership Groups. CG members bundled some topics of 2021 to break the silos between them and increase synergies among the complementary actors. For 2022, the Group identified the following:

- Biodiversity and Climate to help maximise the circular economy contribution to achieving the biodiversity and climate targets.
Led by The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- Enabling Consumer Behaviour through Digitalisation will focus on the digital tools different actors may use to support consumers' shift towards circular behaviour.
Led by The Collaboration Centre on Sustainable Consumption (CSCP)

- Sustainable Products and Design (including DPP & LCA) will focus on sharing best practices from frontrunners of sustainable products and design and the applicability of traceability and tools for circularity in practice.
Led by EIT Circular Economy Community
- Monitoring Circular Procurement / Procuring Sustainable Products aims to upscale and mainstream circular procurement at different levels of public authorities and in the private sector.
Led by OVAM (the Public Waste Agency of Flanders)
- Social Enterprises & Circular Business models wants to spotlight the social enterprise model and circular economy organisations as practitioners and pioneers in shaping and expanding the circular economy.
Led by The Rediscovery Centre

- Circular Bioeconomy and Sustainable Foodsystems wants to raise awareness of the importance and complexity of the circular bioeconomy as a driver of the transition towards a circular economy in Europe.

Led by Innowo

- Buildings and Infrastructure will build on what it started in 2021 and follow with an in-depth exploration of the transition towards a circular use of resources coming from the supply chain itself or other supply chains.

Led by Holland Circular Hotspot

- Textiles will continue offering a meeting platform for stakeholders to unpack and discuss the EU Textile Strategy, including its implementation and good practices.

Led by RREUSE

- Economic Incentives policies will focus on the following types of incentives: (i) Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes and (ii) green taxation, featuring interactive mapping of economic incentives.

Led by EURIC

- Cities and Regions will continue focusing on the governance of circular systemic solutions, including the exchange of approaches and good practices between actors, the definition of common indicators to measure circularity at urban and regional levels, the link between the circular economy and climate, and effective engagement strategies to involve specific sectors in the circular transition.

Led by ACR+

EU circular talks

Since they started in 2020, there have been close to 40 #EUCircularTalks events organised by the ECESP Leadership Groups and other stakeholders.

The Platform launched the three-phase-event concept as a dynamic exchange opportunity where stakeholders can identify bottlenecks and opportunities in the circular economy together.

In 2021, stakeholders, including Coordination Group members, organised 26 events. Seventeen of those were led by the eight Leadership Groups.

In 2022, the Groups adopted a new strategy by looking for synergies between their topics and co-organising some events. Twelve #EUCircularTalks events were organised or planned in 2022:

| TOPIC | ORGANISER | ATTENDANCE |
|---|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <u>Together for Circular Packaging - Learning from the Consumer Insight Action Panel's Packaging Club</u> | CSCP | 69 registrations |
| <u>Measuring Circularity</u> | Circular Flanders | 220 registrations |
| <u>Switching to the circular economy to tackle carbon emissions (May + June)</u> | Normative | 193 registrations |
| <u>EU Digital Product Passport - learning from frontrunners</u> | EIT Circular Economy Community | 688 registrations |
| <u>Accelerating circular behaviours: How can digitalisation help us?</u> | CSCP | 240 registrations |
| <u>The EU Textiles Strategy in motion - What does it mean for the future of this sector?</u> | RREUSE | 688 registrations |
| <u>Circular bioeconomy value chains: insights and best practices</u> | INNOWO | 108 registrations |

| | | |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|
| What role do secondary materials play in new constructions and in buildings renovation? | ENEA | 239 registrations |
| <u>Closing infrastructure material cycles through European cooperation</u> | Rijkswaterstaat | 181 registrations |
| <u>A fair and global approach to reducing resource use</u> | OVAM | 77 registrations |
| <u>How does collaboration support scaling up the impact of social enterprise in the circular economy?</u> | Rediscovery Centre | 54 registrations |
| <u>Network governance - what role for the circular transition brokers?</u> | Circular Change | 69 registrations |

In total, over 2,000 participants registered for the events organised by the Platform and an average of 50% attendance was reached. The #EUCircularTalks are on replay on the ECESP YouTube account.

Following the feedback survey on the concept, users reported a lack of activity on the events' LinkedIn pages. They suggested replacing the platform with extra time right after the event. The Platform proposes that participants and speakers stay on for an extra hour to talk in an informal setting. The Platform SpatialChat has been successfully implemented as the place to go for an additional chat with the speakers. The statistics show that around 10% of the online audience joins the conversation afterwards. The SpatialChat gained in popularity and became a recurrent feature of the concept.

This added interactive opportunity helps the success of the LinkedIn group as participants continue to join the groups.

Interinstitutional and international collaborations

The momentum for the Platform that we saw increasing in 2021 materialised in 2022 in a series of collaborations and events of international magnitude.

The first was the organisation of the Circular Europe Days during Dubai Expo Global Goals Week. During this week, the ECESP CG members mobilised five national country pavilions to host eight events on the circular economy over two days:

| TITLES | NATIONAL PAVILION | COORDINATION GROUP MEMBER |
|--|-------------------|--|
| The power of circular networks | The Netherlands | Holland Circular Hotspot/ Circular Change |
| Circular opportunities on building and infrastructure | The Netherlands | Holland Circular Hotspot |
| Sustainable living and wood | Slovenia | Circular Change |
| Making circularity work for people, cities and regions | Finland | ACR+ |
| Enabling circular electronics: skills for cities, businesses and consumers | Finland | CSCP |
| Future of bioeconomy in the circular economy transition | Poland | Innowo |
| Circular taxation and circular procurement as drivers for the circular economy | Poland | Innowo/Ovam |
| Ireland: collaborating & innovating to accelerate circularity | Ireland | The Rediscovery Centre |

The events showcased what Europe has to offer in the field of the circular economy and highlighted front-running EU circular entrepreneurs. The Platform received support from the European External Action Service for the event.

An online and onsite matchmaking platform provided by the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) facilitated collaboration and networking opportunities for European entrepreneurs.

Despite the time difference with Dubai, 200 participants joined the online sessions, and over 2,000 viewers watched the event on YouTube. A hundred participants joined onsite.

The Dubai event was a landmark in the first half of 2022 in terms of international events, and other international organisations have contacted the Platform. For instance, the International Council for the Circular Economy (ICCE) reached out to ECESP's co-chair Freek van Eijck to look for synergies in establishing a similar platform in India with the support of more institutionalised bodies, e.g. EU-Resource efficiency India (managed by GIZ and the EC delegation in India). Other examples are the increased collaboration with GACERE and UNEP.

Beyond the established contact with international organisations, CG members' organisations are also active in the international arena. The Platform is cited among the collaborators of the Finnish Innovation fund Sitra's World Circular Economy Forum. The 2022 event took place in Kigali. The ECESP organised an accelerator session on network governance and the role of transition brokers.

The Platform also organised side events during the UNFCCC COP27 and the UN biodiversity conference COP 15.

Other events, like the Australian Circular Economy Hub, enable CG members to showcase the EU's expertise in the circular economy beyond its borders.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Platform organised its fifth conference in March 2022. For the first time, the event was co-organised with the country holding the presidency of the Council of the EU. Together, the ECESP and the French presidency held the two-day event on a new normal: “sustainable products for sustainable consumption”. The event brought together leaders from businesses, public authorities, NGOs, knowledge communities and other civil society organisations to advance our transition to a circular economy.

The EESC organised the second day. It gave insights into the practical implementation of European circular economy policies by civil society organisations.

The ECESP’s eight Leadership Groups presented the results of their work, the reports for which are still available on the Platform’s website.

Further to these eight LGs, the Platform’s Coordination Group members organised two more workshops on cross-cutting issues; biodiversity and climate and sustainable products. The first session focused on the circular economy as a transformative solution to tackle the root causes of global challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

The second session aimed to highlight different approaches in different sectors and businesses of various sizes regarding the circular economy in practice.

The COVID-19 health measures affected this conference, making it difficult to hold an entirely on-site event. For that reason, ECESP resorted to a new platform to give users a different experience.

Participants joined the conference via MeetYoo. The virtual conference platform offered visitors networking possibilities via a virtual coffee corner and a matchmaking tool. In the village expo, they had access to content from over 40 exhibitors in ten different booths. Exhibitors included the French presidency, UNEP, the European Commission and other international companies.

More than 1,800 people registered for the two-day event, and over 1,100 attended.

ECESP COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

ECESP's communication channels are mainly digital. The health crisis accelerated the complete digitalisation of the Platform, and most of its activities and events were online.

Although 2022 marks the beginning of more and more in-person activities, the website, digital platforms and social media will remain the core communication channels for ECESP.

The website saw a milestone in 2022 with over 1,000,000 pageviews and over half a million visits since its creation in 2017.

The Platform's social media presence also gained in popularity, with over 7,000 followers on Twitter and over 6,000 on LinkedIn. The ECESP newsletter is now reaching over 7,000 subscribers thanks to continuous communication during the events.

Website

The ECESP website is the Platform's main communication channel. It was launched in 2017 and has since grown, enriched with content from the circular economy community worldwide.

While the content comes directly from the stakeholders, an editorial team managed by the ECESP Secretariat ensures content consistency and accuracy throughout the website.

There is no membership for the website, meaning that everyone can contribute to its growth as the digital one-stop-shop on the circular economy. This reinforces the ECESP brand as a benchmark for the circular economy in Europe and abroad.

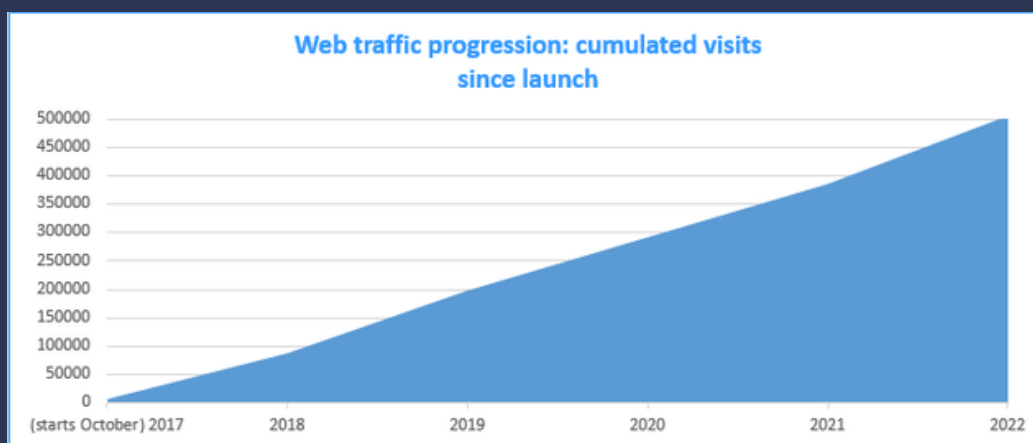


fig. 1: Web traffic evolution since Oct 2017

The number of visits in 2022 was over 120,000, the highest number since the launch of the Platform. The peak moments were around the announcement of the annual conference in February and the conference itself in early March. Looking at website performance over the last three years, it is clear that the most significant increase in traffic on the website is linked to the annual conference.

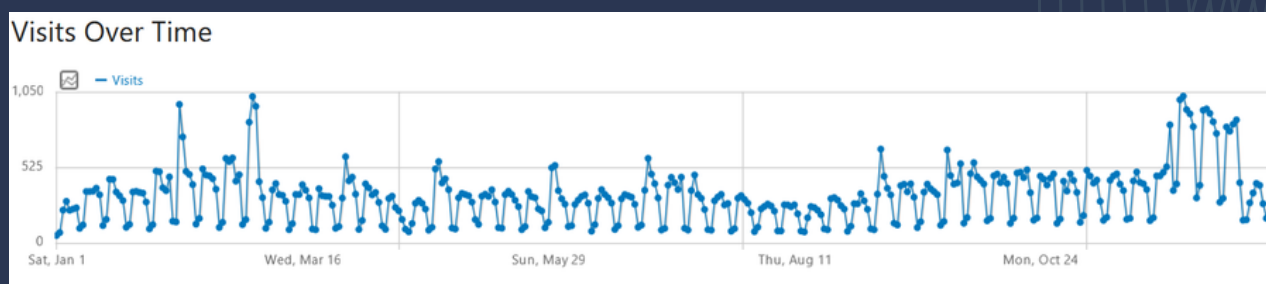


fig. 2: Visualisation of the monthly web traffic in 2022

Looking at the geographic breakdown of website visits, most of the visits in 2022 are from the European continent, with Belgium, Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany and Spain in the top five.

| CONTINENT | VISITS | COUNTRY | VISITS |
|-----------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| Europe | 75,605 | Belgium | 12,764 |
| Asia | 6,701 | Italy | 7,540 |
| North America | 5,318 | United Kingdom | 7,334 |
| South America | 2,103 | Germany | 6,567 |
| Africa | 1,100 | Spain | 6,329 |
| Oceania | 842 | Netherlands | 4,981 |
| Unknown | 269 | France | 4,710 |
| Central America | 227 | United States | 4,136 |
| | | Portugal | 2,203 |
| | | Finland | 2,184 |

fig. 3: Left - Number of visits per continent | Right - Top countries per visits in 2022

Social media

The Twitter and LinkedIn accounts are important for ECESP communication. Complementary to the website, social media is the primary channel for disseminating stakeholder content.

During the pandemic, the two accounts were vital for keeping the circular economy community together and aware of new developments in various fields and policies.

Social media during the pandemic also had the positive effect of reaching an audience beyond Europe's borders.

The first ECESP account on social media was with Twitter in 2018, followed by LinkedIn and YouTube in 2020.

Twitter continues to gain followers. The account went from 6043 followers in Dec 2021/Jan 2022 to 7347 followers in Dec 2022/Jan 2023.

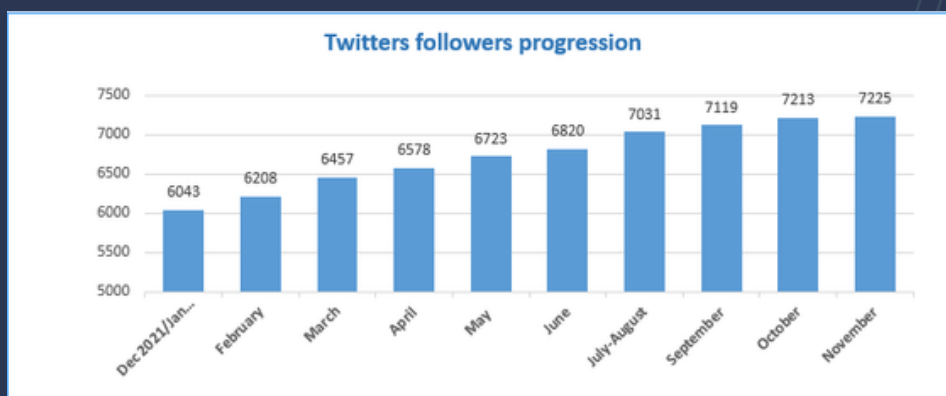


fig. 4: Evolution of the number of followers for Twitter in 2022

LinkedIn continues its impressive progress. The social media account launched in 2020 is already drawing even with Twitter. The number of followers went from 3773 in December 2021/January 2022 to 6927 in December 2022/January 2023.

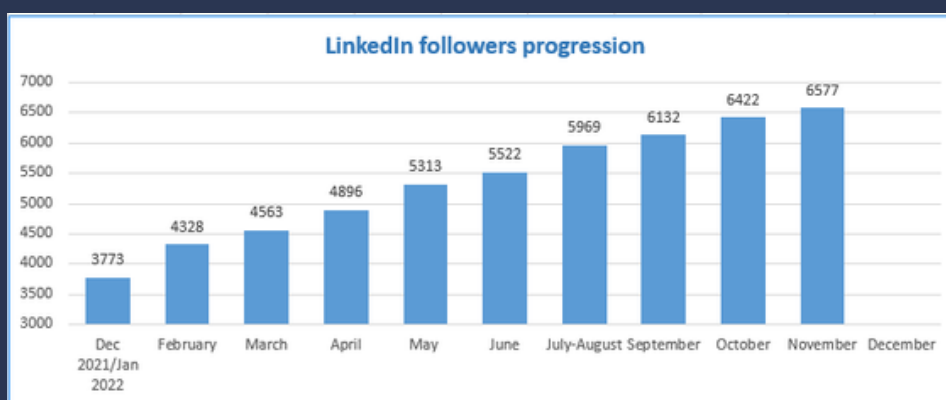


fig. 5: Evolution of the number of followers for LinkedIn in 2022

Website content

The content on the website comes from stakeholders via the submission form. The content is then edited by the Secretariat's editorial team, published and disseminated on social media.

The number of published items increased to over 2400 by September 2022 (good practices, strategies, research documents, platforms and networks, news and events, etc.).

These numbers reflect the interest of the circular economy community in the Platform. There is growing interest in the Platform from stakeholders outside the EU.

Good Practices and Events are the items most frequently submitted to the website. This is consistent with the traffic on the website, where the sections on Good Practices and News & Events are the most visited pages since the launch of the Platform in 2017.

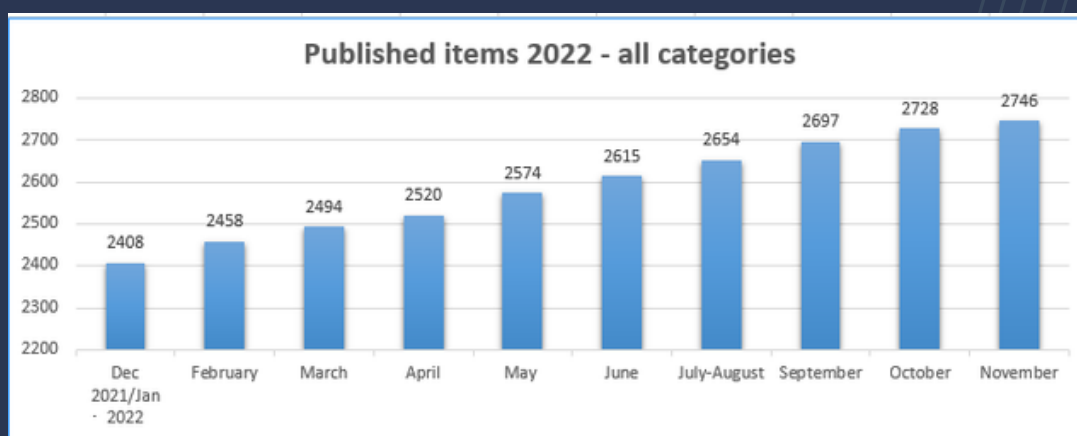


fig. 6: Evolution of the number published of content on CESP website in 2022

The ECESP website contains a variety of content types - period from January to September 2022:

| TYPE | DESCRIPTION | TOTAL |
|----------------|--|-------|
| CG Activities | Coordination Group activities from 2021 onwards | 65 |
| Commitments | Private and public voluntary actions with specific targets | 7 |
| Education | Initiatives targeting education and skills for the circular economy | 7 |
| Events | Conferences, workshops and (virtual) seminars with a circular dimension | 715 |
| Financing | Good practices and initiatives specifically addressing funding and financing aspects | 10 |
| Good practices | Circular business models, outreach campaigns | 715 |
| Knowledge | Reports, papers and studies advancing the circular economy | 416 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----|
| Networks/ Platforms | European networks or platforms dealing with the circular economy | 174 |
| News | Updates for the specialised circular economy community | 406 |
| Pledges (Plastics Strategy) | Company and value chain commitments to use recycled plastic | 48 |
| Strategies | Public policies committing to a circular transition | 62 |

**In mid-2021, a new content classification was added to the website: the 'Toolbox' section. This includes Education and Financing items, and some of the Knowledge and Good Practice items transferred over to it. The detailed breakdown will be updated in 2022.*

CONCLUSION

The ECESP continued its positive trend in 2022. The Platform follows a logical development pattern that reflects the strategies put in place by its Steering Group and delivered by the Coordination Group.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine opened Europe's eyes to a harsh reality: its dependency on others for its primary resources and raw materials.

At the same time, these events have demonstrated Europe's strength from within, thanks to its entrepreneurs' expertise in the various circular economy fields.

2022 marked a shift for the Platform as a leading example in the international arena. The numerous requests for collaboration and advice reveal that the change in mindset is happening, and Europe is leading the way.

The ECESP communication channels hit several milestones regarding the number of visits, pageviews and social media growth. Still in the pipeline, other actions should reinforce this growth in 2023. The introduction of digital platforms for events in the ECESP communication strategy should increase the Platform's visibility beyond Europe's borders in 2023.

Increased collaboration between ECESP and circular economy multipliers should lead to more content being submitted to the website.