



Coordination Group

2025-2028 MANDATE



2026-2028

Work
programme



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Foreword

“Long is the way by precepts, short and effective by example.”

- Seneca

If we truly understand the essence of the circular economy, it becomes clear why it is no longer optional — and why it matters now more than ever. The circular economy is not a standalone sustainability agenda. It is a strategic framework to strengthen Europe’s competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy, while delivering tangible value for people, regions and businesses.

Europe is operating in an increasingly complex context. Geopolitical uncertainty, climate impacts, biodiversity loss and growing resource dependencies are intensifying pressures across economies, societies and value chains. In this environment, **accelerating the transition to a circular economy is not only about environmental performance** — it is about safeguarding social cohesion, ensuring a just and socially inclusive transition, and reinforcing the European Union’s core values of solidarity, fairness, responsibility and cooperation.

With this understanding, the new mandate of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP) and its Coordination Group builds on the achievements of the previous cycle, which delivered an ambitious programme of 47 key activities, including two annual conferences, 13 #EUCircularTalks and numerous stakeholder dialogues. These efforts ensured that circular principles remained firmly embedded within Europe’s Green Deal and industrial strategy, while strengthening the ECESP’s role as a trusted forum for collaboration, peer learning and policy-relevant action. Building on this foundation, the ECESP’s delivery role increasingly relies on effective orchestration across policy, business and places — a function often enabled by transition brokers supporting collaboration and implementation across value chains and places.

The policy momentum for the coming years is clear. With the **European Green Deal**, the upcoming **Circular Economy Act**, the **Clean Industrial Deal** and the renewed **EU Bioeconomy Strategy**, the European Union is placing strong emphasis on scaling circular and biobased solutions. These frameworks aim to reduce resource dependency, optimise resource management, promote just transition, combat biodiversity loss and pollution, support de-fossilisation and enhance long-term climate resilience. Yet stakeholders across sectors consistently point out that ambition must now be matched with implementation: a supportive and systemic legal framework, clearer standards, effective governance and accountability, stronger value chain collaboration, accessible financing and targeted support for local and regional actors.



Against this backdrop, the ECESP recognises several **cross-cutting dimensions** that are essential to accelerating Europe's circular transition.

- Circular diplomacy is becoming increasingly important as Europe deepens cooperation and knowledge exchange with global partners and strengthens sustainable value chains beyond its borders.
- Digitalisation and artificial intelligence are increasingly central to enabling transparency, efficiency and innovation, unlocking new circular business opportunities.
- Education and lifelong learning are equally critical to ensure that Europe's workforce, institutions and communities have the skills and capabilities needed to thrive in a circular economy.

These transversal enablers will be embedded across the leadership groups to ensure a forward-looking, interconnected and systemic approach — while ensuring that circular and biobased solutions deliver simultaneously for the climate and biodiversity.

2026-2028



strategic priorities



This work programme is structured around **four strategic priorities** that reflect both the evolving EU policy landscape and stakeholder expectations.

First, we will enhance the effectiveness of circular economy policy and business model tools by translating regulatory developments into **practical implementation pathways** — especially for SMEs, cities and regions. This includes supporting sustainable product design, longer product lifespans, repair and reuse, remanufacturing and access-based models such as leasing, sharing and pooling. It also includes addressing a growing stakeholder concern: ensuring that circular capacities and infrastructure already developed across Europe can be maintained, strengthened and protected from avoidable failure.

Second, we will **accelerate the deployment of the biobased circular economy** by strengthening renewable, regenerative and nature-positive value chains, aligned with planetary boundaries and biodiversity objectives. This priority reflects the EU's ambition to reinforce strategic autonomy, decarbonisation and rural innovation, while ensuring stronger integration between bioeconomy actions and wider circular economy goals.



Third, we will contribute to **creating a functioning single market for secondary raw materials**, increasing both supply and demand for high-quality recycled materials. Reducing Europe's reliance on primary resources is essential for industrial resilience, competitiveness and economic security. This priority directly supports the European Critical Raw Materials Act and advances the EU Economic Security Strategy by embedding circularity as a tool to reduce strategic dependencies and safeguard access to critical resources for the green transition.

Fourth, we will **strengthen stakeholder networks, peer learning and citizen engagement** — particularly for SMEs, regions and cities — recognising that the circular transition ultimately takes place in communities, workplaces and everyday life. Through inclusive collaboration models and region-specific approaches, the ECESP will help build the capacities, skills and enabling conditions required to scale circular biobased solutions across Europe, in line with just-transition principles and inspired by the values of the New European Bauhaus: sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion.

To deliver on these priorities, the leadership group structure for this mandate introduces a more horizontal and interconnected architecture, enabling topics to evolve beyond annual cycles while maintaining coherence and strategic direction. The **five leadership groups** — Transitioning to circular value chains; Advancing an integrated circular bioeconomy; Enabling an inclusive circular society; Economic and financing instruments for the circular transition; and Increasing demand for European circular solutions — will translate this work programme into tangible actions, outputs and partnerships.

This work programme is ultimately a collective endeavour. It reflects the shared commitment of stakeholders across Europe to move from ambition to delivery, from isolated initiatives to systemic change, and from circular economy concepts to real-world impact. By mobilising knowledge, innovation, investment and collaboration, the ECESP will continue to serve as a platform for action — supporting Europe's transition towards a circular, just, resilient and competitive economy that works for people, nature and prosperity. Finally, the success of Europe's circular transition will also depend on strong storytelling and credible narratives that reach beyond expert circles, with the ECESP — as a network of networks — helping connect policies and circular solutions with everyday realities across Europe.

Ladeja Godina Košir
Chair of the ECESP Coordination Group





ECESP leadership groups

Structure and governance

For this mandate, the leadership structure builds on the achievements of previous leadership groups (LGs) and the priorities set by the new Coordination Group. The approach introduces a more **horizontal** and **interconnected** architecture that enables medium-term development of topics extending beyond a single year.

- **LG1: Transitioning to circular value chains**
- **LG2: Advancing an integrated circular bioeconomy**
- **LG3: Enabling an inclusive circular society**
- **LG4: Economic and financing instruments for the circular transition**
- **LG5: Increasing demand for European circular solutions**

Each leadership group provides a stable strategic direction underpinned by the objectives listed above, while allowing flexible “specific topics” to evolve, deepen and scale over time. The thematic areas are designed to interlink and complement one another, ensuring a systemic perspective, agility and responsiveness to emerging challenges — without losing the overall coherence and long-term vision of the Coordination Group.

LG1 Transitioning to circular value chains

This leadership group will focus on the practical transition from linear to circular production systems by strengthening value chain collaboration in areas where systemic circularity can significantly strengthen resilience, reduce environmental impacts and support EU strategic priorities, particularly in sectors such as critical raw materials (CRM), plastics, textiles and the built environment.

The group will explore how overall resource use can be reduced and how resources can be extracted in a sustainable way. Another objective would be to analyse how resources and materials can be kept in circulation longer through resource cascading, improved design, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, refurbishment, high-quality recycling and increased uptake of secondary raw materials. The group can promote the role of transition brokers as trusted and fair facilitators who coordinate circular flows across companies and regions, facilitate cross-sector cooperation, connect supply and demand, coordinate data and knowledge flows and help overcome practical, regulatory and market barriers to circularity. The aim is also to advance the professionalisation of this role by strengthening cooperation between business and academia to support structured training, development and integration into value chain transformation.



The group will aim to map and strengthen circular value chain ecosystems across sectors, including:

- mapping forward and reverse product, material and information flows, cross-border movement and used products,
- identifying opportunities for industrial symbiosis between sectors and regions,
- analysing ecosystems where circular startups meet and collaborate to identify gaps to scale higher-R circular practices,
- making recommendations to SMEs as they transition to circular business models by offering practical guidance, facilitating value chain collaboration and matching, and improving access to finance and procurement opportunities,
- developing sub-themes on topics such as critical raw materials and ensuring clear interlinkages with other relevant leadership groups,
- fostering the role of knowledge brokers in linking design, use-phase and end-of-life practices,
- assessing tensions and synergies between circular practices and emission reduction targets,
- identifying enabling conditions to scale circular value chain models to market level, with the support of transition brokers.

Building on the Green Deal, the Clean Industrial Deal, the Circular Economy Act and related regulatory frameworks, the group will work on strengthening the role of European companies — large, small and mid-sized — in turning EU environmental policy into practical, scalable actions.

The group will focus on how stakeholders can effectively implement circular requirements, anticipate future legislation and turn compliance into competitiveness. It will explore barriers and enablers across different sectors, helping businesses interpret policy expectations, manage transition risks and develop workable pathways for implementation. Special attention will be paid to SMEs and supply chain actors which often face the highest resource, capacity and knowledge constraints.

The ultimate goal of this leadership group is to develop sector-relevant, replicable and scalable value chain models that accelerate Europe's transition to a resource-efficient, resilient and competitive circular economy.

Key results of this group may include, but are not limited to:



Objective 1: Build EU value chain transparency

Publish up to 6 cross-sector value chain maps.

Identify up to 20 bottlenecks and 20 enablers per chain.



Objective 2: Scale reuse, repair and remanufacturing

EU-wide framework for repair & reuse hubs.

Introduce 3 regional repair ecosystem pilots - tangible cases.

Produce guidelines to differentiate secondhand goods from waste.



Objective 3: Enable SME transition to circular economy models

Identify, curate and disseminate 10 of the most relevant existing toolkits and resources on scalable business models.

Repository of learning tools, case studies, digital tools supporting SMEs with the implementation of circular models - with 10 pilot projects included.



Objective 4: Create guidelines for interoperable reverse logistics systems

Three sector templates (electronics, textiles and packaging).

EU guidance on cross-border movement of reusable items - based on 3 selected cases.



Objective 5: Strengthen industrial symbiosis

Identify up to 30 symbiosis opportunities across sectors.

Map and introduce 5 cross-sector pilot symbiosis projects.

Identify the needs, barriers and opportunities for the industrial sector to transition to circular practices (including access to recycled CRMs).

Understanding and mapping DPP-related challenges, shaping clear influence messages, and developing actionable solutions and best practices.



**LG1 - Transitioning to
circular value chains**





LG2 Advancing an integrated circular bioeconomy

This leadership group will help accelerate the deployment and scaling of regenerative, circular solutions across Europe's biological value chains.

Building on the new EU Bioeconomy Strategy, the group will focus on strengthening the interconnections between biodiversity, climate mitigation and adaptation, resilience, competitiveness and sustainable biobased value chains, ensuring that biobased activities operate within planetary boundaries and apply circular economy principles.

A key focus will be on connecting stakeholders across sectors — producers, land managers, industry, researchers, cities and regions — to promote integrated solutions that reduce pressure on natural resources, restore ecosystems and improve resilience in the face of climate change, climate mitigation and adaptation and geostrategical shifts. The group will also explore synergies between circular bioeconomy practices and sustainable agrifood systems, including reducing food loss and waste, promoting soil health and strengthening local circular loops.

The group will aim to accelerate the shift to **sustainable, regenerative and circular use of biological resources across the EU value chain**, including:

- Building circular systems for biomass: from production and processing to reuse, repair, remanufacturing, nutrient recovery, bioplastics recycling and regenerative return to the biosphere — while embedding cascading use, waste hierarchy and biodiversity protection and restoration as core principles,
- Mapping and improving biobased value chains, including lead markets,
- Strengthening industrial symbiosis,
- Developing regional bioeconomy ecosystems,
- Supporting SMEs and rural communities,
- Advancing standards for biobased materials,
- Improving monitoring and policy coherence across agriculture, forestry, food, biowaste and biobased industries,
- Improving methodologies and modelling for assessing sustainably sourced biomass availability across use and non-use,
- Identifying and disseminating good practices related to the circular bioeconomy,
- Monitoring whether the EU plays a constructive role on the international scene as part of biobased value chains, striking the right balance between EU interests and sustainable global partnerships,
- Identifying and trying to verify how the listed outputs deliver for biodiversity.



Key results of this group may include, but are not limited to:



Objective 1: Build circular value chain transparency and coherence across key biobased sectors

Publish 7 cross-sector circular value chain maps (food, forestry, plastics, textiles, mobility, packaging, construction materials) highlighting flows, leakages and circularity opportunities. Identify 20 systemic bottlenecks and 20 enabling conditions per sector, including design and treatment barriers, reverse-logistics gaps and regulatory inconsistencies.

Deliver a policy alignment brief identifying synergies and possible inconsistencies between the EU and national bioeconomy strategies and key frameworks such as CAP, CEAP / national circular economy strategies and action plans, national biodiversity and climate strategies (NBSAPs and NCDs), and key legislative frameworks such as WFD and ESPR. Based on the assessment, propose 10 solutions.



Objective 2: Scale reuse, repair, recycling and remanufacturing, and biological loop infrastructure

Suggest EU-wide minimum standards for repair, reuse and remanufacturing hubs for biobased products (wood, textiles, packaging, bioplastics).


Identify 10-15 industrial symbiosis opportunities linking agriculture, food, forestry, aquaculture and biochemicals.



Objective 3: Accelerate the transition of SMEs and rural regions to circular bioeconomy models

Develop a toolkit of 3-5 scalable circular bioeconomy business models, including regenerative systems, product-as-a-service and cascading material valorisation.

Create a youth and skills programme — integrate them into 3 existing educational programmes at EU level.


**LG2 - Advancing an
integrated circular
bioeconomy**





LG3 Enabling an inclusive circular society

This leadership group will focus on advancing the social dimension of the circular transition, ensuring that circular economy policies and practices translate into quality jobs, fair access to skills, inclusive participation and a just transition for all communities. Building on EU priorities related to social equity, reskilling, behavioural change and the New European Bauhaus, the group will explore how circularity can strengthen social cohesion, wellbeing and cultural transformation.

Emphasis will be placed on just transition programmes, connecting circular principles with social fairness, decent work, territorial cohesion and community resilience. The group will also identify behavioural change and sustainable lifestyle shifts that are positive, accessible and affordable pathways for people and communities to participate in the circular transition, while also promoting responsible production and responsible consumption through education and infrastructure.

Aligned with New European Bauhaus principles — sustainability, aesthetics and inclusion — the group will integrate the role of culture, creativity and social innovation, demonstrating how circularity can enhance quality of life in urban and rural areas, activate local communities and support new cultural narratives that inspire change.

Key results of this group may include, but are not limited to:



Objective 1: Strengthen social fairness and just transition in the circular economy

Develop an EU Just Transition and Circularity Framework mapping social risks and opportunities across up to **6 priority sectors**.

Identify up to **10 social bottlenecks** and **10 enablers** related to skills, employment and inclusion.



Objective 2: Support local circular lifestyle transitions and behavioural change

Create a European **Circular Lifestyles Playbook**, highlighting accessible and affordable behaviour shift models (potentially also a CO2 calculator & tips for Positive Sustainable Lifestyle).


Identify up to **3 community-based pilot projects** integrating R strategies, sharing, social enterprises and citizen engagement.

**Objective 3: Build inclusive circular skills ecosystems**

Establish a repository of **learning tools, case studies and digital resources**, supporting **organisations or local actors** with the implementation of circular social models.

**Objective 4: Promote cultural and creative-sector leadership in circular transformation**

Identify **3 replicable models** where cultural and creative organisations support circular behaviour, community engagement and local regeneration.

 **LG3 - Enabling an inclusive circular society**

**LG4 Economic and financing instruments for the circular transition**

This group will help mainstream circular thinking into finance, public spending and economic policy, by enhancing education and capacity building for the financial sector. It aims to contribute to redefining competitiveness in terms of resource sufficiency, resilience, innovation capability and long-term value creation, positioning circularity as a strategic economic advantage for the EU. In addition, LG4 will analyse the need for intervention intended to maintain on the market the capacities and infrastructure that have already been developed and reduce the risks of bankruptcy, in a context where the return on investment remains a key indicator for entering and staying in the market.

A core focus will be how financial actors, policymakers at different levels and businesses can accelerate the uptake of circular models through targeted investment, economic instruments, mission-driven innovation and inclusive financing mechanisms that ensure that SMEs, social enterprises and vulnerable regions are not left behind. The group will examine barriers such as a lack of data on circular performance, limited access or blockers to capital and fragmented market signals, and propose actionable solutions. In addition, the group will identify the different categories of beneficiaries of support and what instruments they can access, not only to obtain financial aid but also to derisk their investments. Programmes such as REsourceEU, Horizon Europe and other EU financial instruments will be promoted and explained, with a focus on how targeted de-risking mechanisms can strengthen the bankability of circular business models and catalyse private investment.



The group will aim to establish a level playing field at EU level where circular business models are not placed at a disadvantage compared to linear ones, while also exploring measures that can further enhance the financial attractiveness of circular approaches. It will also aim to identify and advance economic and financing instruments that mobilise private capital for the circular transition by de-risking investments, aligning incentives with EU Taxonomy-aligned circular metrics, and embedding circularity into mainstream financial decision making to strengthen efficiency, resilience and economic security. It will help design and promote economic instruments, fiscal reforms and financing mechanisms that shift financial flows away from the linear economy, including:

- Identifying good practices for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) implementation as a tool to address price externalities,
- Developing circular taxation frameworks that incentivise repair, reuse, remanufacturing and recycled content, and aligning EU financial incentives (VAT, labour taxes, resource taxes) with circularity principles,
- Working on eliminating perverse incentives, combating free-riding, strengthening eco-modulation, analysing compliance of EU sellers with legislation such as the Digital Services Act in terms of consumer manipulation and online sales,
- Advising circular SMEs through targeted financial measures,
- Promoting policy coherence between taxation, EPR, carbon pricing and investment frameworks, in line with the New Circular Economy Action Plan,
- Promoting training and engagement with financial actors to integrate EU Taxonomy-aligned circular metrics into financial decision making, position circularity as a driver of efficiency and risk reduction, and mainstream capital allocation,
- Analyzing the enforcement of mandatory sustainability disclosures in relation to the new Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive,
- Finding a way to measure the benefits of avoided emissions by meeting the climate reduction targets.



Key results of this group may include, but are not limited to:



Objective 1: Ensure that economic instruments create investable market signals for circular activities

- Proposals for EU-level minimum standards for EPR fee modulation that explicitly reflect investment-relevant signals, including cost internalisation, margin stability and design incentives.
- Identification of 10 product categories and value chains where existing pricing and fiscal signals are insufficient to influence investment decisions, with recommended corrective design features.
- Comparative analysis of EPR and related economic instruments across Member States, highlighting fragmentation that undermines scale, predictability and cross-border investment.
- Guidance on the combined use of EPR, VAT measures, carbon pricing, resource taxes and public procurement to strengthen revenue certainty and reduce perceived risk for circular activities.



Objective 2: Design circular taxation measures that shift incentives from linear to circular

- Prepare an EU Circular Taxation Toolkit with three actionable tax shift measures.
- Develop model VAT rules for circular goods/services, including “VAT on net added value only” for reuse/remanufacturing based on existing case studies from EU Member States.
- Produce a cross-sector impact assessment on how circular tax shifts affect SMEs, competitiveness, employment and investment behaviour across Member States.



Objective 3: Close the circular finance gap by improving bankability and de-risking investment

- Mapping of financing gaps across circular value chains, identifying where projects fail to attract capital despite positive environmental and economic fundamentals.
- Identification and assessment of effective de-risking mechanisms, including guarantees, blended finance and public-private partnerships applicable to circular activities.
- An EU Circular Investment Pathway clarifying how SMEs and project developers can access EIB, ESIF, LIFE, national instruments and private finance.
- Frameworks or tools to assess and improve the finance readiness of circular projects and SMEs, focusing on revenue models, risk profiles and scalability.



Objective 4: Redirect mainstream financial capital toward circular economy activities

- Analysis of how mandates, benchmarks, risk models and internal capital allocation rules influence investment in circular activities.
- Identification of policy, regulatory or market-based levers that can shift capital allocation toward circular economy activities across banks, insurers and asset managers.
- Practical recommendations for integrating circular economy considerations into mainstream lending policies, investment strategies and portfolio construction.
- Examples of how public finance can be used strategically to catalyse, rather than replace, private capital in mainstream markets.



Objective 5: Align regulatory, supervisory and capability frameworks with capital allocation outcomes

- Assessment of when and how sustainability disclosure and taxonomy alignment meaningfully affect financing conditions and investment decisions.
- Identification of gaps where current disclosure or taxonomy frameworks fail to translate into improved access to finance for circular activities.
- Analysis of supervisory and prudential practices that may inadvertently constrain or enable investment in circular business models.
- Identification of capability gaps within financial institutions and recommendations for practical tools and approaches to integrate circular business models into credit assessment, investment analysis and risk management.



LG4 - Economic and financing instruments for the circular transition



LG5 Increasing demand for European circular solutions

This leadership group will focus on accelerating the uptake of circular solutions (products and services) by stimulating demand across public and private markets. Recognising that enhanced market pull is critical for scaling the European circular economy, LG5 will support the development and adoption of robust demand-side measures, including green and circular public procurement, market incentives and cross-sector collaboration to drive systemic change.

The group will work to address persistent barriers such as fragmented demand, lack of harmonised criteria, insufficient awareness among buyers, and limited access to scalable circular solutions. By fostering dialogue between procurers, suppliers, policymakers and end-users, LG5 aims to create the enabling conditions for sustained market growth, competitiveness and innovation in circular value chains.

Emphasis will be placed on empowering public authorities, large buyers and sectoral clusters to leverage their purchasing power, embed circularity in procurement strategies, and set ambitious yet practical targets for the uptake of circular products and services. In the context of the European Commission's proposal for minimum mandatory GPP criteria and targets, LG5 can identify whether they were included in sectoral legislation and what their output was. The group will also explore ways to amplify private sector demand, promote voluntary agreements and support the mainstreaming of circular criteria in procurement and purchasing decisions across Europe.

Key results of this group may include, but are not limited to:



Objective 1: Scale circular procurement across public and private sectors

- Map and gather insights from projects and initiatives in different Member States and at EU level to feed into the EU framework for circular procurement, including guidance and good practices.
- Provide input on the needs of the demand side to support the other LGs in diverse sectors (e.g., construction, ICT, furniture, textiles, packaging, food).
- Facilitate the creation of buyer-supplier networks and matchmaking platforms to connect demand and supply for circular solutions.
- Inform procuring authorities about circular solutions and products.



Objective 2: Strengthen market signals and incentives for European circular products and services

- Propose recommendations that stimulate demand and increase knowledge about how to formulate criteria. Circular entrepreneurs are often at a disadvantage, so with this action we want to create a fair and competitive opportunity to thrive in the evolving market landscape.
- Gather insights and share them on how circular performances become visible and comparable for buyers.
- Identify and address key regulatory and market barriers to scaling demand-side measures at EU and Member State level.



Objective 3: Build capacity and awareness among public authorities, buyers and market actors

- Identify, analyse and disseminate existing toolkits and training programmes for public and private procurers, with a focus on practical implementation, market dialogue and impact measurement.
- Organise at least 5 knowledge exchange events and peer learning sessions, bringing together frontrunners, policymakers and market actors from across Europe.
- Produce a repository of successful circular procurement cases and lessons learned, highlighting replicable models and measurable outcomes.



Objective 4: Monitor progress and foster continuous improvement

- Identify key performance indicators (KPIs) and a monitoring system to track the uptake and impact of circular procurement at EU and Member State levels.
- Publish an annual progress review with recommendations for scaling up and mainstreaming circular demand-side measures.

LG5 - Increasing demand for European circular solutions

