

European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform Annual Conference 2026

Summary Report

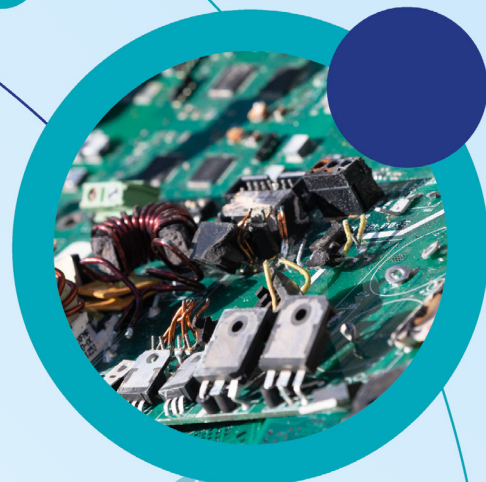




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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2026 European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform Conference (ECESP), “A competitive and fair circular Europe: the ambition at the heart of the Single Market,” positioned circularity as a central pillar of Europe’s competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy. As the EU prepares the forthcoming Circular Economy Act, the conference provided a high-level forum for policymakers, businesses, finance actors, civil society, youth representatives and regional stakeholders to discuss how circular economy principles can strengthen the Single Market, reduce dependence on primary and critical raw materials, lower input costs for industry, and support climate and environmental objectives.

Day 1, led by the European Commission, focused on the policy and regulatory agenda. Opening contributions from Commissioner Jessika Roswall and EESC President Séamus Boland insisted on the need to accelerate the transition through effective collaboration and set the context for plenary discussions on the Circular Economy Act and accompanying measures, the global dimension of circularity, financing needs, and youth perspectives. A key moment was the keynote speech by Enrico Letta, Dean of IE University, President of the Jacques Delors Institute and author of the report on the Single Market. His intervention placed the circular economy within the broader debate on the future of the Single Market, underlining the need to overcome fragmentation and build stronger EU-wide markets for secondary raw materials and circular products.

Day 2, organised by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and ECESP Coordination Group, shifted from policy ambition to stakeholder implementation. Sessions explored stakeholder priorities for the Circular Economy Act, the circular bioeconomy, and five practical workshop themes: circular value chains, scaling circular bioeconomy solutions, inclusive circular society and skills, financial and economic instruments, and demand creation through procurement and Extended Producer Responsibility. Across the agenda, the conference emphasised that circularity must be both competitive and fair: supporting industrial transformation and innovation while delivering local jobs, affordability, inclusion, reskilling and tangible benefits for citizens.

In terms of participation, on Day One there were 422 stakeholders, mostly industry and businesses, as well as public authorities and policy makers across both venues. On Day Two, 274 stakeholders attended, also comprising of mostly industry and business stakeholders and public authorities and policymakers.

This report summarises the key messages and speaker contributions for each day, followed by a social media analysis, participant registration overview, and analysis of the feedback provided by the participants.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION AND SETTING THE SCENE

The European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP) is a joint initiative of the European Commission (EC) and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). ECESP works as a network of networks, bringing together stakeholders active in the circular economy across different sectors. ECESP annual conference is the platform's flagship event and the main annual stakeholder meeting on circular economy in the EU.

This year's edition, "A Competitive and Fair Circular Europe: The ambition at the heart of the Single Market", focused on circularity as a key driver of Europe's competitiveness, economic security and sustainability.

The two-day conference brought together the European circular economy community to exchange views on the latest EU policy and regulatory developments and to showcase good practices from across Europe. The circular economy is increasingly recognised as a strategic tool to reduce Europe's dependence on imported raw materials, including critical raw materials, while keeping valuable resources in the economy for longer. It also supports more sustainable production, decarbonisation, innovative business models and responsible consumer behaviour. In this context, the European Council has mandated the Commission to accelerate the transition towards a more circular economy, helping to lower input costs for EU industry and reduce dependencies on primary materials, including by seizing opportunities linked to the bioeconomy. This ambition is further reflected in President von der Leyen's announcement of a future Circular Economy Act, aimed at creating stronger market demand for secondary materials and a single market for waste, as well as in the Competitiveness Compass and the Clean Industrial Deal.

Day 1, organised by the European Commission, focused on EU-level policy and regulatory developments. It opened with statements from Commissioner Jessika Roswall and EESC President Séamus Boland, followed by a keynote speech by Enrico Letta linking the circular economy to the future of the Single Market. Moderated by Katrina Sichel, the day included four plenary sessions and a closing discussion, addressing the Circular Economy Act, competitiveness, financing, global circularity and youth perspectives.

Day 2, organised by the European Economic and Social Committee, focused on stakeholder engagement and practical implementation. It showcased inspiring circular economy practices from across Europe and explored how businesses, regions, civil society and social partners can help turn circular economy ambitions into concrete action, including through circular value chains, skills, financing tools, public procurement, Extended Producer Responsibility and demand creation for circular products and services. The afternoon consisted of the five Leadership Groups of the ECESP meeting to discuss their relevant thematic, followed by a reporting back session and concluding remarks to look ahead.



ANNUAL CONFERENCE

DAY 1 - 22 APRIL 2026

Summary of Day 1

Day 1 of the ECESP Conference 2026 focused on high-level policy discussions around the forthcoming **Circular Economy Act (CEA)**. The debate consistently highlighted that the **circular economy cannot be framed solely as an environmental objective but should rather be interpreted as an economic and security imperative**. In particular, acknowledging that the business case for a circular economy is still hampered by a mixture of failures, the debate centred on the **CEA as a market-building instrument**, which aims to support the single market for secondary raw materials, increase the supply of high-quality recycled materials and stimulate demand for these materials across the EU. Across all sessions, a strong emphasis emerged on **moving from policy ambition to implementation and position circularity as a cornerstone of Europe's competitiveness, resilience and strategic autonomy**.

Circularity can significantly reduce dependency on external resources and foster strategic autonomy in Europe. In this context, stakeholders stressed the **urgency of securing a strong Single Market for secondary raw materials in Europe**, improving investment conditions and supporting circular solutions that are scalable, competitive, and socially inclusive. The **harmonisation of rules**, especially around waste and secondary materials, together with **investment incentives** and **more stable regulations** can drive a stronger business case for circularity.

The **role of youth engagement** was also emphasised across different sessions, as circularity must be accessible, affordable, and socially desirable. Youth maintains a central role in **guaranteeing that circularity can deliver on social fairness**, slowing resource flows and achieving emissions reductions. On this point, stakeholders reflected on the systemic shift needed to achieve a just circular economy, which requires **moving beyond recycling towards practices such as redesign, reuse and repair**.

Opening

SPEAKERS

- **Jessika Roswall**,
Commissioner for Environment,
Water Resilience, and a
Competitive Circular Economy
(ENV)
- **Séamus Boland**,
President of the European
Economic and Social Committee
(EESC)

MODERATOR

- **Katrina Sichel**

OVERVIEW

The conference opened with remarks emphasising the urgency of accelerating Europe's transition towards a circular economy, framed not only as an environmental necessity but as a strategic, economic, and geopolitical imperative.

A central theme throughout the opening was the need for the circular economy to be embedded structurally within the EU economy starting from product design and extending across value chains, markets, and governance systems.

KEY MESSAGES

- **The CEA is a market-building instrument** aimed at creating the right economic conditions for circular solutions to compete, scale, and become the norm. The Act needs to strengthen demand for secondary raw materials while ensuring their quality, availability, and predictability across the EU.
- **The fragmentation of the Single Market remains a major barrier** to circular investments, as businesses face regulatory challenges, unstable supply of secondary materials, and insufficient economic incentives. Inconsistencies in waste definitions, national regulatory frameworks, and cross-border flows of secondary materials, require stronger harmonisation and reduced administrative burdens.
- **The EU economy remains structurally far from circular**, with only a small share of materials coming from recycled sources.
- **Circularity is a strategic response to geopolitical and economic vulnerabilities**, as Europe's dependence on imported raw materials and fossil-based resources exposes it to external shocks. In this context, increasing circular resource use can simultaneously reduce waste and strengthen resilience.
- **The transition to a circular economy is closely linked to the bioeconomy**, with both approaches aiming to optimise resource use, reduce reliance on fossil inputs, and support innovation in sectors such as plastics, textiles, and bio-based materials. **Key industrial ecosystems to target include steel, plastics, and textiles.**
- **Platforms such as ECESP demonstrate that inclusive stakeholder participation improves policymaking**, by connecting on-the-ground expertise with EU-level decision-making and fostering shared ownership of the transition.
- **The circular economy must be framed as both a competitive and fair economic model**, ensuring that sustainability objectives are aligned with economic growth, innovation, and social inclusion across regions and sectors. **Youth engagement is essential** to the success of the transition, both because younger generations will be most affected by today's decisions and because they bring innovation and demand for change.
- **There is an urgent need to move from policy ambition to concrete implementation**, with a stronger focus on delivering tangible results on the ground, accelerating action, and ensuring that legislative frameworks translate into real economic and environmental impact.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS



Jessika Roswall

Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience, and a Competitive Circular Economy (ENV)

- Circularity must be integrated *“from the start,”* particularly at the design phase of products and systems.
- *“Only 12% of materials from the circular economy comes from recycled materials.”*
- *“Our task is not to replace the market, it's to make sure that the market rewards the outcomes that we want. And to make circularity a credible business proposition, not just a policy aspiration.”*
- *“The most important ingredient here is collaboration. Policymakers, businesses, practitioners, scientists and civil society must work together. Across sectors, value chains and stages. From design and creation to use and recovery to waste.”*
- **Businesses lack the right conditions to invest in circular solutions.** Companies face difficulties in financing repair services, circular product design, and innovative business models due to unstable and fragmented markets. Improving these conditions through better regulation and incentives is therefore essential.
- Sector specific examples relevant for the development of circular solutions include **steel, plastic and textiles**. In these cases, circularity assists in addressing overconsumption and waste generation. The development of bio-based solutions for plastics and textiles can further increase environmental benefits of circular solutions.
- **The importance of collaboration** through platforms like ECESP help to connect practical experience with policy-making. The inclusion of **youth voices** was highlighted as essential for shaping future-oriented solutions.
- Concluding, she reaffirmed the vision of a **competitive and fair circular Europe**, underlining that achieving this requires removing barriers, strengthening the business case, and building a **true single market for circular solutions**.



Séamus Boland

President of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

- **Partnership and participation** are driving the circular transition. The ECESP platform is a successful example of collaboration, improving policy by engaging stakeholders in relevant debate and feeding their perspectives into legislative thinking.
- Circularity must move beyond discussion to **concrete delivery**, requiring a shared commitment across institutions, businesses, trade unions, civil society, and other stakeholders.
- The **EESC and the Commission need to work in partnership** to deliver the circular economy. The European Commission's commitment towards this principle of shared ambition and practice was praised.
- *“The Circular Economy is not just a nice-to-have, it is a must-have. This is not just something we need to do for the planet, this is something we must do for Europe.”*

SLIDO POLL RESULTS

After the opening, participants expressed their objective in attending the Annual Conference, as well as what they think needs to happen to accelerate the Circular Economy, via a Sli.do poll.

I'm attending this year's conference to:

202

Get up-to-speed on the upcoming Circular Economy Act and related legislation



75 %

Network to my heart's content



35 %

Enjoy a speaker line-up hotter than an Oscar's Afterparty



16 %

Listen to, and raise my voice in the dynamic Youth Check session



10 %

Be inspired to meet the challenges and opportunities ahead



35 %

What do you think needs to happen to accelerate the Circular Economy?

158

Improve the business case for recycling and secondary raw materials



38 %

Better share inspiring and replicable success stories



3 %

Fix the regulatory issues that are hampering progress



36 %

Work towards the completion of the (currently fragmented) Single Market



23 %

Plenary Session 1

Embedding circular economy principles in the Single Market: If not now, when? The role of the forthcoming Circular Economy Act

SPEAKERS

- **Eric Mamer**,
Director-General for
Environment (ENV)
- **Constantinou Costas**,
Cyprus Permanent Secretary
- **Pierfrancesco Maran**,
ENVI Committee Chair
- **Eivind Kallevik**,
CEO and President of Hydro
- **David Fitzsimons**,
Director of the European
Remanufacturing Council

OVERVIEW

This purpose of this session was to gather stakeholders' views on the forthcoming objectives and scope of the CEA, and what is needed to address pressing issues. These views will feed into the Commission's preparation process.

The plenary discussion particularly focused on the weak business case for circularity and the fragmentation of the Single Market as key barriers to be addressed in policymaking. Progress towards a European circular economy has been slow, as the circularity rate in the EU economy stagnated over the last 15 years. Lowering barriers to circularity means addressing regulatory and market failures, primarily by harmonising rules to lower avoidable costs.

KEY MESSAGES

- The CEA aims to leverage the EU single market to **mainstream circular economy practices**, moving beyond fragmented national approaches and creating a unified framework that strengthens demand for secondary raw materials and supports business scale-up.
- Critical priorities are **securing access to feedstock and improving the flow of secondary raw materials**. This includes enhancing collection and sorting systems, ensuring materials such as aluminium scrap remain available within Europe.
- The **regulatory fragmentation across Member States remains a key obstacle**, particularly concerning waste definitions, classification systems, and cross-border transport rules. This lack of harmonisation drives up costs for businesses operating in circular value chains.
- The **circular economy is increasingly framed as an economic and industrial strategy**, not only an environmental one, with stakeholders emphasising its role in competitiveness, resilience, energy efficiency, and long-term growth for European industries.
- **Product design and eco-design frameworks** are critical entry points for circularity, as decisions made at the design stage determine the potential for reuse, repair, remanufacturing, and recycling throughout the product lifecycle.
- **Stakeholder engagement is a key enabler of successful policy design and implementation**. Achieving circularity at scale requires integrated action across sectors and governance levels, coordinating policymakers, industry, national and local authorities to ensure that circular solutions are both practical and socially acceptable.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS



From left: **Eric Mamer**, Director-General for Environment (ENV); **Constantinou Costas**, Cyprus Permanent Secretary; **Pierfrancesco Maran**, ENVI Committee Chair; **Eivind Kallevik**, CEO and President of Hydro; **David Fitzsimons**, Director of the European Remanufacturing Council.

Eric Mamer

Director-General for Environment (ENV)

- The Commission's role in the CEA builds on an already active landscape, involving both DG ENV and DG GROW, and aims at designing a framework that **accelerates and scales up the circular transition**.
- The CEA must **leverage the full scope and strength of the Single Market** to move circular economy practices from a niche activity into the mainstream. This requires navigating the complex intersection between environmental policy, which is a shared competence between the EU and Member States, and Single Market rules, which are under exclusive EU competence. The objective is to transform circularity into a **market-driven reality rather than a purely regulatory ambition**.
- There is a need to **create demand where it is not yet self-sustaining**. Bio-based and recycled alternatives are sometimes more expensive than virgin fossil counterparts (e.g. 1kg of recycled textiles costs twice as much as 1kg of virgin textiles). In a market economy, consumer choice drives uptake. The role of policy is therefore to **foster enabling conditions in a sustainable way**, moving beyond purely administrative actions and without adding further regulatory burdens.
- Circularity is about organising value. A key priority is to **secure secondary raw materials feedstock**, e.g. for aluminium scrap and electronic waste. Ensuring sufficient volumes at competitive prices is essential for scaling up recycling and strengthening Europe's **strategic autonomy**, especially in relation to critical raw materials and fossil fuel dependency.
- **Waste management is a structural bottleneck**. There is a lack of harmonisation in how waste is defined across Member States. This fragmentation inhibits the flow of materials across borders, particularly when materials are classified as hazardous. A central challenge for the CEA will therefore be to enable a **seamless transition from "waste" to "secondary raw material"** in order to tap feedstock availability. This change is potentially supported by digitalisation tools and improved traceability systems.
- On global competitiveness, he stressed the need to ensure a **level playing field**, both in imports and exports, noting that tools such as customs codes (e.g. food product plastics and recycled plastics) and trade defence instruments must be used carefully to avoid unintended consequences.
- Circularity must begin at the **design stage**, through existing frameworks such as the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation. These efforts must be developed in **close cooperation with industry**.

Constantinou Costas

Cyprus Permanent Secretary

- For the Cyprus Presidency, circular economy policy is a clear priority. The strategic importance of the CEA is in **strengthening the market for secondary raw materials** and positioning the EU as a **global leader in circular economy by 2030**.
- **Recycling sectors across Member States are under pressure**, facing high energy costs and unfair competition from materials falsely presented as recycled. Administrative burdens also disproportionately affect SMEs, reinforcing the need for **regulatory coherence and simplification**.
- For smaller Member States such as Cyprus, economic constraints require exporting waste streams for processing abroad. This underlines the importance of the CEA in establishing **clear, harmonised rules** that support fair competition and enable value creation within the EU.

Pierfrancesco Maran

ENVI Committee Chair

- Stressed that gender balance is crucial for a successful discussion.
- Environmental policies must be **socially acceptable and carefully communicated** to gain public support. Policy-makers should find the **highest level of ambition that remains politically feasible**. **Clear alternatives and effective communication** are essential to ensure public buy-in for transformative policies.
- The fragmentation of **national regulations** as a major obstacle. While some national frameworks are advanced, their diversity prevents the emergence of a **true European market for circular solutions**.
- *"If we have rules, but we don't have companies that support our market, then we lose the fight."*

Eivind Kallevik

CEO and President of Hydro

- Through an industrial perspective, **opportunities and practical challenges** of circularity in the aluminium sector were highlighted. Recycled aluminium requires only around **5% of the energy needed for primary production**, making it more efficient economically and environmentally. However, **the main bottleneck is access to scrap**.
- Europe remains dependent on imports while large volumes of valuable materials are exported, often to regions such as China where they are recycled and re-enter the EU market under different conditions. This creates a **competitiveness challenge**.
- Europe has the **technical capability** to lead in circular production, but the **willingness to pay** for circular solutions is not yet sufficient. Fiscal incentives are needed to retain critical raw materials and compete with global prices.
- *"We have to stop talking about it as waste and start talking about it as a critical resource."*
- Practical barriers that the CEA should address, include **cross-border transport restrictions** for materials (e.g. cross-border shipping of trains at their end-of-life), **insufficient collection and sorting systems**, and **lack of economic incentives** to retain materials within Europe.

David Fitzsimons

Director of the European Remanufacturing Council

- The ECESP as a unique platform that connects practitioners, policymakers, and stakeholders across Europe, enabling the sharing of knowledge, the formation of alliances, and the translation of practical experience into policy.
- There is a **strong signal from investors and stakeholders regarding the direction of the CEA**, with many closely watching whether the EU will maintain its commitment to circular economy ambitions. While progress has been made, the circular transition remains a long-term journey, requiring continued policy support, market development, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Remanufacturing is a key circular business model**; recent regulatory developments have clarified that remanufactured products can be considered "new" under certain conditions. It is thus different than "refurbishing". The example of Schneider Electric taking back products for remanufacturing and reselling 1300 products with the same guarantees and at the same price, demonstrates how **targeted regulatory adjustments can unlock new market opportunities**.

Keynote address



SPEAKER

Enrico Letta,
Dean of the IE University
and President of the
Jacques Delors Institute

OVERVIEW

At the end of this session, Mr Enrico Letta, Dean of the IE University and President of the Jacques Delors Institute and author of the report on the Single Market, delivered a keynote speech.

KEY MESSAGES

- The CEA must be understood as part of a larger strategic framework, acting as a pillar of the “One Europe, One Market” vision. Europe is entering the third phase of European market integration, addressing the structural incompleteness of the Single Market across the three key sectors of energy, connectivity and financial markets.
- It is important to act now; traditional legislative timelines are no longer compatible with the current geopolitical and economic context. Circularity is directly linked to strategic autonomy and security, as inefficient resource use and weak circular systems increase Europe’s dependence on external actors, particularly in areas such as energy, technology, and critical raw materials. In this sense, advancing the circular economy is not only an environmental or economic priority, but also a core element of Europe’s resilience strategy. Enrico Letta is optimistic because he sees a new push going to the right direction.
- A central theme of the keynote was the importance of scale and integration. Letta highlighted that fragmentation across 27 national markets continues to limit Europe’s potential, particularly in terms of investment, industrial capacity, and innovation. Achieving scale requires not only deeper market integration but also regulatory simplification, including a shift away from directives towards regulations, to ensure uniformity across the EU. He also pointed to the need for a “28th regime”, including a simplified corporate framework for EU start-ups.
- Finally, Letta underlined the critical role of financial market integration, noting that a significant volume of European savings, estimated at around €300 billion annually, is currently invested outside the EU, particularly in the United States. Redirecting this capital towards European markets would be essential to boost investments in circular economy solutions.

SLIDO POLL RESULTS

Following the keynote presentation, participants were invited to express what their main takeaways were via a Slido poll.



Plenary Session 2

Embracing circular economy principles globally: how to strengthen ties with partner regions and learn from each other?

SPEAKERS

- **Valère Moutarlier**,
Deputy Director-General
for European Industry and
Decarbonisation (GROW.DDG3)
- **Maeng Hak-kyun**,
Director, Resources Recycling
Division, Ministry of Climate,
Energy and Environment of the
Republic of Korea (online)
- **Veronika Hunt Šafránková**,
Head of Brussels Office, UNEP
- **Bart Gruyeres**,
Director of Neo-Eco Ukraine |
Circular Economy Consultancy
- **Joss Blériot**,
Executive Lead for Policy &
Institutions at Ellen MacArthur
Foundation; ECESP CG member

OVERVIEW

In a context where geopolitical tensions are intensifying existing vulnerabilities and creating new ones, **circular economy is becoming a key pillar of economic security**. At the same time, international cooperation is expanding, with circular economy increasingly embedded in partnerships and multilateral initiatives. This creates opportunities for alignment, mutual learning, and development of common approaches. **Stronger EU engagement with partner regions is essential to support the global transition to a circular economy**, aiming at promoting economic security and sustainability standards.

The objective of this session was to explore how the Commission can strengthen cooperation with partner regions on circular economy policies and practices, foster mutual learning and better engage in multilateral initiatives. Further, speakers discussed the role of consumers in boosting market uptake of circular products, reflecting on how policymaking can build up trust on the demand-side.

KEY MESSAGES

- Circular economy is increasingly becoming a **global economic and security priority**, as geopolitical tensions, resource scarcity, and supply chain vulnerabilities push countries and regions to move away from linear models and strengthen resilience through more efficient resource use.
- Strong international partnerships are essential because **no region can deliver the circular transition alone**. The EU can strengthen cooperation with partner regions by supporting **shared evidence, best-practice exchange, and common policy tools**, enabling countries to learn not only from successful examples but also from regulatory or implementation challenges that did not work as expected.
- Global and regional platforms can play an important role in creating a **common language for circularity**, but they must be connected to practical delivery on the ground, including training, capacity-building, investment support, and project implementation.
- **Harmonisation of standards and recyclability requirements** is needed to close circularity gaps in international trade. Crucially, trust is the core condition for international circular markets and depends on **transparency, traceability, reliable certification systems, and enforcement**.
- The **business case for circularity** remains essential: circular products and business models will only scale if companies see clear demand, secure feedstock, market uptake, supportive taxation, and investment conditions that make circularity economically viable.
- **Businesses must be directly involved in policy dialogue**, both to showcase progress and to communicate the barriers they face, so that circular economy rules and investment frameworks reflect real market conditions.
- **Consumer trust must be built through quality, transparency, and policy support**, ensuring that circular products are not perceived as inferior to linear alternatives and that consumers are not asked to carry the full financial responsibility for the transition.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS



Presenting: **Maeng Hak-kyun**, Director, Resources Recycling Division, Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment of the Republic of Korea.

Valère Moutarlier

Director-General for European Industry and Decarbonisation (GROW.DDG3)

- Circularity must be treated as part of Europe's industrial and economic agenda. The EU needs **strong partners** to achieve meaningful progress; cooperation should take place both between like-minded groups and bilaterally.
- The EU is working to build a strong regulatory and operational framework that can support industrial scale, economic security, and trusted cooperation. Good enforcement is essential to **maintaining trust between partners**.
- The Commission's role should shift towards more "executive" tasks. This includes supporting circular projects in developing and improving investor visibility.
- **Circularity will not succeed without the business community investing and producing circularly.** This requires secure feedstock, market uptake, and a clearer economic case for circularity, including a discussion of whether customers are willing to pay for the benefits of lower dependency and lower environmental impact.

Maeng Hakkyun

Director, Resources Recycling Division, Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment of the Republic of Korea

- The South Korean ministry has recently been strengthened through government restructuring, incorporating energy alongside climate and environment. His work focuses on Korea's recycling system, recycled materials, and policy implementation, including areas linked to the ESPR and PPWR. The EU is exemplary in the green transition and highlighted the importance of cooperation between Korea and Europe.
- There is a need for **international compatibility and harmonisation of circular economy standards**. Korea is a major importer of European products, particularly cars. Trade between the EU and Korea has increased since the Free Trade Agreement.
- However, this also creates circularity challenges: European products are recycled in Korea and Korean products in Europe, but production and recyclability standards are not always aligned. Strengthening cooperation to harmonise production standards would therefore improve recyclability across borders.
- A more **transparent certification systems for recycled materials** is needed. Certification systems currently differ between countries, creating uncertainty and limiting market value, while harmonisation could help create incentives for recyclers and enable stronger international cooperation.
- On consumer trust, the ultimate aim should be that consumers do not have to think of recycled products as different or inferior. Circular products should simply perform as well as products made from virgin materials, with technology and policy ensuring quality.

Veronika Hunt Šafránková

Head of Brussels Office, UNEP

- The role of international cooperation, shared evidence, and cross-sectoral policy development is important for accelerating circularity. Circularity connects the environmental agenda with competitiveness and economic growth.
- **Shared evidence and best practices** across regions are needed; existing global platforms, such as the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency, already provide useful spaces for mutual learning.
- **Cross-sectoral governance is crucial**; as an example, UNEP's support for Brazil's Circular Transition Plan was driven by the Ministry of Finance rather than the environment ministry. It shows how circular economy can become a cross-cutting economic strategy rather than a narrow environmental policy. Other examples of shared platforms in African countries include collaboration on public procurement, skills and capacity-building, and common databases.
- *"We need shared evidence and best practices on what works across regions, and global platforms are an excellent way to learn from each other."*

Bart Gruyeres

Director of Neo-Eco Ukraine |
Circular Economy Consultancy

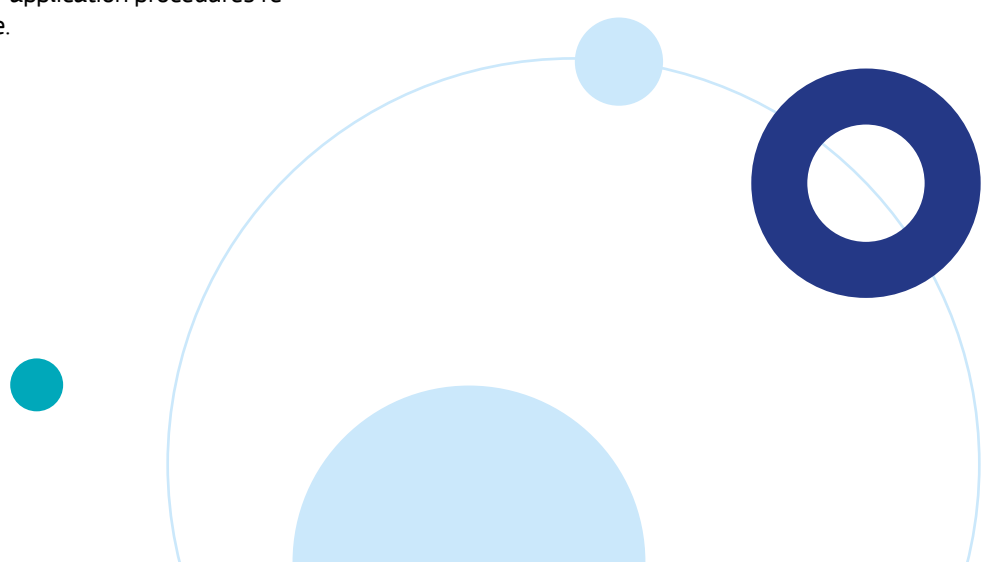
- His organisation works to bring circular projects to life, with around 30 ongoing initiatives, including projects funded by Horizon, LIFE, and the World Bank. He reflected on the experience of operating in Ukraine, as a significant example of moving towards circularity while navigating shifting geopolitical conditions.
- **Ukraine is an accelerator of circular economy innovation**, as the war has triggered practical innovation and strengthened grassroots responses. Hundreds of organisations in the country are now involved in projects related to circularity. **Cross-border programmes such as Horizon and LIFE can help transfer technology across regions and sustain collaboration beyond the lifetime of individual projects**, even if application procedures remain sometimes burdensome.

- To further support knowledge-sharing, **the role of AI as a key tool for accelerating cooperation is essential**. Whereas finding the right expertise once took significant time, AI can now help connect actors and ideas more quickly.
- Circular products should not always depend on a consumer premium. Markets do not respond to such premiums, and **circular products need to become competitive in their own right**. Consumer trust takes time to build, especially in sectors such as construction, where persuading actors to change can take several years.

Joss Blériot

Executive Lead for Policy & Institutions at
Ellen MacArthur Foundation; ECESP CG member

- **International platforms can be useful when they generate a common language**, but there is still the need to deliver concrete outcomes on the ground. Examples include EU and Member State engagement abroad, including EU delegation support for trainings and workshops in Brazil, and support for circular economy roadmaps in partner countries such as Mexico.
- **Trust, traceability, and transparency** are crucial in relation to market access and enforcement. Partners need to trust that products entering the European market meet expected standards, and tools such as the **Digital Product Passport** can play a role in making this possible.
- **Cooperation now needs to become more technical and granular**. Sectoral measures demand that policymakers be aware of specific industry challenges, and businesses must play their role accurately by explaining what they need from policy.
- Consumers need to be empowered through better communication, assisting them in making more circular choices.



Plenary Session 3

Financing circular economy needs: how to overcome persistent investment gaps?

SPEAKERS

- **Claudia Fusco**,
Director for Compliance, Governance & Support to Member States
- **Emmanuel Chaponniere**,
Head of Division at the European Investment Bank
- **Anna Douglas**,
Senior Sustainability Adviser at SEB Group
- **Andrei Geica**,
Chief Policy and Impact Officer at Sporos Platform; ECESP CG member
- **Andrew Morlet**,
Chair of UK Government's Circular Economy Taskforce, Circular Economy Lead, Standard Chartered Bank
- **Åsa Ågren Wikström**,
Member of County Council, Västerbotten Region, Sweden, and CoR EPP representative in the ENVE Commission

OVERVIEW

While the EU's circular economy investments increased substantially in recent years, **the EU circular economy funding remains low**, at about 1% of the EU budget. Similarly, the EIB Group increased its annual circular economy financing by 167% between 2020 and 2024, but this remains a small part of its total investments.

A significant investment gap remains in relation to the EU's transition to a circular economy by 2040 especially in sectors such as **construction, textiles, batteries and vehicles, and in lifecycle stages such as circular design and end-of-life**, which are crucial for keeping materials in use. Financing barriers persist, hindering markets from growing and achieving scale. Most new investment is expected to come from the private sector. Based on this premises, the objective of this session was to explore how the EU can address investment barriers and improve public funding.

KEY MESSAGES

- Circular economy investment has grown, but it **remains far below the level required to support the EU transition by 2040**, as circular economy funding still represents only a very small share of the EU budget.
- The investment challenge is not only about the **quantity of capital available**, but about whether circular economy projects can become sufficiently **bankable, predictable, and scalable** to attract private finance. Indeed, public funding should be used strategically to **de-risk projects, create demand, and crowd in private capital**, rather than attempting to finance the transition alone.
- **High-impact sectors such as construction, textiles, batteries, and vehicles remain important priorities** because they have major environmental impacts and significant relevance for EU competitiveness and strategic autonomy. However, **sectoral prioritisation should not lead to a fragmented approach**, as some investments need to be **cross-cutting across value chains, materials, territories, and lifecycle stages**.
- **Stable, trustworthy, and predictable policy frameworks are essential** to investor confidence; backtracking on policy or making frameworks overly dynamic can increase uncertainty and discourage investment.
- A **closer dialogue between policymakers, banks, investors, project developers and local authorities** is needed. In particular, the financial sector needs clearer **definitions, data, reporting requirements, and reference frameworks** to understand circular economy risks and opportunities. Investors' expectations must align with the specific timelines, returns and value creation pathways of circular models.
- The opportunity now is to connect circularity more strongly to **resilience, security, and competitiveness**, making it a mainstream finance topic rather than a niche sustainability concern.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS



Plenary Session 3: "Financing circular economy needs: how to overcome persistent investment gaps?"
Speaking: **Claudia Fusco**, Director for Compliance, Governance & Support to Member States.

Claudia Fusco

Director for Compliance, Governance & Support to Member States

- There is a need for *"a true secondary raw material market which can work and boost investment"*. Circularity still accounts for only a very small part of the EU budget due to both **market and regulatory failures**. While the Commission must support innovation through public funding, such as the case of Horizon's Research and Innovation Action, there is a need for private investors to step up.
- Approximately **51% of the required investment gap is linked to the high-impact sectors**, confirming the relevance of the sectoral priorities selected within the EU circular policy agenda. In the current geopolitical context, **construction, textiles, batteries and vehicles** not only have major environmental impacts due to high resource use, but they are also of strong relevance for EU competitiveness.

Emmanuel Chaponnière

Head of Division at the European Investment Bank

- The estimated investment gap amounts to around **€82 billion**. While priority sectors are useful to provide a compass of urgency, there is a need for cross-cutting initiatives. The issue is not limited to the availability of capital but expands to the **bankability of operations**.
- Circular economy financing may follow a similar path to the one of renewable energy, where projects have long been initially considered 'unbankable' by financial actors, but the creation of policy targets as well as public investment in infrastructure have then provided a strong positive signal.
- **Cities and municipalities** need assistance in developing circular economy action plans and identifying accurate financing pathways. In this context, EIB has provided free resources to assist local actors in building credible and actionable plans that can attract investments.

Anna Douglas

Senior Sustainability Adviser at SEB Group

- Geopolitical instability, critical raw material dependencies, and disruptions to industrial supply chains are increasingly relevant. In this context, **circular business models aligning with EU strategic autonomy provide interesting investment opportunities**. Nevertheless, financial actors' understanding of timelines and value propositions in the circular economy is still limited.
- Rather than looking only at priority sectors, investors also assess **business models, enabling ecosystems, and transition pathways**. This includes the need for **stable and trustworthy policy frameworks**, with high-level rules that still leave room for flexibility.

Andrei Geica

Chief Policy and Impact Officer at Sporos Platform;
ECESP CG member

- **Capital flows towards lower risk and more predictable returns**. The core challenge is therefore to direct capital away from linear models by gradually creating the conditions for circular products to outcompete linear alternatives.
- *"Conditions need to be created where non-circular products become economically non-viable. This would mean shifting the centre of gravity of capital. Circular economy models need to produce cash flows to attract capital over the linear economy models."*
- Due to the heterogeneity of the financial sector, the case for circularity must be communicated in a tailored way. Indeed while some investors might care for environmental benefits, venture capital primarily focuses on fast returns, profit, resilience and cost savings.

Andrew Morlet

Chair of UK Government's Circular Economy Taskforce,
Circular Economy Lead, Standard Chartered Bank

- Financing circularity requires moving beyond macroeconomic and systems-level arguments towards the way banks, financiers, and companies make decisions. **The circular economy remains still too niche within the financial sector**, with only a small number of European banks seriously working on the topic.
- While **the financial system is far behind policy and business innovation**, the Commission can play a key role in setting up clear definitions and a common reference framework to decrease uncertainty and improve investors' understanding of circularity.
- *"It is important to build capacity in the finance system to help financiers understand what the circular economy really is. This requires clear definitions and frameworks, which can serve as a compass for banks, investment, and financiers. The Commission has a role in creating such a framework."*

Åsa Ågren Wikström

Member of County Council, Västerbotten Region, Sweden,
and CoR EPP representative in the ENVE Commission

- The **local and regional dimensions matter**, where European circularity objectives are translated into practical implementation. While high-impact sectors must serve as a priority compass, **from a regional perspective the circular transition is systemic and requires solutions that can simultaneously target multiple sectors and governance levels**.
- Local and regional authorities need funding and support to develop coherent circular solutions, but they also must be interpreted as investors that facilitate the transition. Their ability to deliver ultimately depends on how funding instruments are designed in terms of accessibility and flexibility.

Plenary Session 4

“Youth Perspectives on the forthcoming circular economy act: the floor is yours!”

SPEAKERS

- **Jessika Roswall**,
Commissioner for Environment,
Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular
Economy
- **Nicoletta Merlo**,
EESC Vice-President of the EESC Youth group
- **Alba Mullen**,
Circular Economy Co-Coordinator,
Generation Climate Europe
- **Priya Saikumar**,
Academics for Circular Economy
(part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Dario Barcella**,
Circular Economy Co-Coordinator,
Generation Climate Europe (part of the
ECESP Coordination Group)

OVERVIEW

Young people aged 15–29 have a key role to play in making the circular economy a reality through their daily choices and actions as consumers and as citizens. Moreover, young people will live with the medium and long-term consequences of today's decisions.

This dedicated session provides a structured space for young people to express their views on how the forthcoming CEA could impact them and what transformational changes most matter to them when creating a more circular economy. The objective is to enable the Commission to gather youth's views on the CEA which will feed into the preparation process.

KEY MESSAGES

- **Youth engagement is essential for shaping the circular transition**, as young people bring long-term perspectives, urgency, and a clear understanding of the risks associated with current linear consumption models.
- **Circularity should become the default and most attractive option**, where sustainable products and services are accessible, affordable, high-quality, and socially desirable, rather than niche or burdensome alternatives.
- **Circularity must go beyond recycling and include reuse, repair, and reduced consumption**, with a stronger focus on slowing resource flows and extending product lifetimes. **The circular transition is not only technical but also societal and behavioural**, requiring a shift from a “throwaway culture” to a culture of responsibility and stewardship.
- **Structural challenges such as fragmented markets, limited traceability, and lack of harmonisation were highlighted as key barriers** to scaling circular solutions.
- **The importance of clear communication, capacity-building, and inclusive implementation** was underlined, alongside the need to support SMEs and ensure benefits are shared across regions.
- **The transition must also consider territorial and social dimensions**, ensuring that circular economy benefits are distributed across regions, including rural areas, and contribute to cohesion.
- **Health and safety considerations must be integrated**, ensuring that circular products are non-toxic and safe, reinforcing trust in circular solutions.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Nicoletta Merlo

EESC Vice-President of the EESC Youth group

- Participation of youth in policy making is essential as they bring innovation and the long-term perspective. Therefore, there are ongoing EESC's efforts to strengthen youth contribution in decision-making. Dedicated initiatives include the establishment of a youth group coordinating youth related initiatives across the EESC committees' and mechanisms to engage youth in policy-making processes such as the "youth test".

Jessika Roswall

Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy

- Meaningful input from younger generations is essential, as policy decisions will shape their future and as they are more affected by environmental degradation and climate change than any other generation. The Commission aims at integrating youth perspectives into legislative processes through instruments such as "Youth Check" and many more initiatives. This mechanism is part of the preparatory process for the CEA, DG ENV's key piece of legislation this year aimed at boosting recycling, reducing waste, and lowering dependence on imported raw materials. Young people's contributions will be crucial in shaping it. They have a right to be heard, and Commission will listen to them.
- *"The younger generation understands what's at stake – you see the risks of the current consumption model, you know that resources are finite, and you take responsibility to choose circularity. You recognise that circular options need to be accessible and affordable to everyone."*

Alba Mullen

Circular Economy Co-Coordinator,
Generation Climate Europe

- Circularity must be built into the system, so it becomes the default, trusted, and affordable choice, while supporting those already driving the transition. A circular future should make sustainable choices the easiest, cheapest, and most natural option, not a conscious effort.
- *"An ideal circular future is where a recycled product brings more satisfaction than a new product. Now is the time to make all these products not only available to all but also socially desirable."*
- This requires reshaping markets, not just improving waste management. Fragmentation across the EU is a major barrier; harmonised rules and strong market signals are essential.
- The current system makes wasteful options cheaper; this is designed, not inevitable. Producers, not consumers, should bear more of the cost of the transition.
- Targeted policies and incentives can make circular behaviours mainstream and support local businesses. In particular, young circular entrepreneurs need fair conditions and support to compete with large linear-model companies.



Young people aged 15-29 together with Commissioner Jessika Roswall, Commissioner for Environment, Water Resilience and a Competitive Circular Economy.

- Circular economy is a system based on both “stocks” (all the resources and materials already in circulation), and the “flows” of those resources between people, sectors, and countries.
- A truly circular economy requires two major shifts: extending the lifespan and improving the quality of material stocks, while also making resource flows smoother, more transparent, and less wasteful.
- The CEA could play a key role in enabling higher-value circular strategies beyond recycling by reducing regulatory barriers and addressing the current fragmentation of markets and waste systems.
- A greater EU harmonisation of definitions related to waste, by-products, and secondary raw materials, as well as stronger traceability tools (such as digital product passports), could help building trust and improving visibility over where materials are, where they come from, and where they are going.

AUDIENCE CONTRIBUTIONS



Participants at the Plenary Session 4 “Youth Perspectives on the forthcoming circular economy act: the floor is yours!”.

- Youth perspectives highlighted both systemic challenges and practical expectations for the CEA. Participants stressed that **internalising the environmental and social costs of linear economic systems is crucial to ensure a fair competition** between primary and secondary materials. The revenues from these fees should be used to support circular products and services.
- Circularity was consistently framed as a **broader transformation of the economic model**, a “**resource revolution**”, rather than a waste management exercise. Participants stressed that circularity should focus on reducing overall material consumption (material footprint), slowing material flows, promoting sufficiency, reuse and repair, and respecting planetary boundaries. In this context, several contributions emphasised that Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes should go beyond recycling objectives and create stronger incentives for product durability, reparability and reuse, including through eco-modulation mechanisms.

- Circular products should not only be available but also more desirable and satisfying than new ones, while current consumption patterns (e.g. fast fashion flows) and the continued inflow of low-cost short-lived products into European markets undermine progresses.
- Participants stressed the importance of supporting innovation, skills development, academia, start-ups in strategic sectors and the creation of quality jobs linked to the circular economy transition.
- Several participants also highlighted the **importance of traceability**, including knowing where materials come from, as well as ensuring that consumers are informed about how to properly dispose of or recycle products they no longer use, such as mobile phones.
- A young representative from the audience stressed that the CEA must be people centred. *“The CEA should go beyond technical measures and focus on people; including different voices ensures that no one is left behind. Additionally, the CEA should include clear **communication strategies**, so citizens know what is changing and what is expected of them. All in all, the CEA has to deliver feasible solutions within a unified single market, to make the EU more resilient.”*
- One participant stressed the importance of fully integrating **health and safety** considerations into the circular economy, ensuring that circular products are non-toxic and safe.
- One participant highlighted the importance of **cross-sector collaboration and industrial symbiosis**, noting that waste or by-products from one sector can become valuable resources for another. Examples included the reuse of electric vehicle batteries for home energy storage. To unlock these opportunities, participants called for greater cooperation across sectors, common rules and definitions, and further progress on end-of-waste and by-product frameworks, particularly to facilitate the circulation of secondary materials across Member States.
- Participants stressed the importance of focusing on implementation and using clear, practical language to facilitate discussions and implementation across Member States.
- Participants also highlighted **challenges faced by SMEs** in navigating circular economy legislation. They called for clearer and simpler guidance, easier access to affordable secondary raw materials, and stronger support for education, skills and capacity building.
- Some participants also linked circular economy objectives to broader questions of **economic resilience and strategic autonomy**. They argued that reducing dependence on virgin raw materials and external suppliers is increasingly important in the current geopolitical context.
- One participant emphasised the importance of assessing the **territorial dimension of the circular transition** and ensuring that its economic, social and environmental benefits are distributed fairly across regions and communities.

Concluding remarks

SPEAKER

Ladeja Godina Košir,
Founder and Executive Director of Circular Change;
Chair of the ECESP Coordination Group

Philip Nugent,
Director General for EU, International and
Maritime Affairs in the Department of Climate,
Energy and Environment, Ireland

KEY MESSAGES

- The CEA should be understood as both a **sustainability and resilience instrument**, contributing to strategic autonomy, reduced dependencies, and more stable supply chains. Circularity must be framed not only in environmental terms but also through its **economic and competitiveness benefits**, including innovation, job creation, and support to SMEs.
- The CEA is part of a broader policy architecture and should be seen as “**connective tissue**” linking to key initiatives such as the Critical Raw Materials Act and wider industrial and competitiveness strategies.
- Strong **partnerships across institutions, businesses, and civil society** are essential, as the circular transition requires a compelling **narrative and shared vision**. Systemic change depends not only on regulation but also on how societies understand and value resources.
- Platforms such as ECESP **play a key role in bridging policy and practice**, connecting stakeholders and supporting implementation of circular principles on the ground.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS



Philip Nugent, Director General for EU, International and Maritime Affairs in the Department of Climate, Energy and Environment, Ireland.

Philip Nugent

Director General for EU, International and Maritime Affairs in the Department of Climate, Energy and Environment, Ireland

- Under the incoming Irish Presidency there is particular urgency to accelerate the circularity transition in light of recent global shocks. Indeed, circularity is about building shorter, more sustainable supply chains and addressing fundamental challenges that affect communities and economies across Europe.
- The CEA is a **flagship initiative that is not only part of the sustainability agenda but also a central element for Europe's resilience and strategic autonomy**. The Act is therefore positioned within a wider policy framework, linking to initiatives such as the Critical Raw Materials Act as well as broader industrial strategies and climate targets.

Ladeja Godina Košir

Founder and Executive Director of Circular Change;
Chair of the ECESP Coordination Group

- The ECESP Annual Conferences have showcased the **value of bringing diverse voices together** and the importance of listening and sharing key learning. ECESP has a unique role as a platform that connects policy and practices, enabling openness and cooperation in the circular transition.
- “If the circular economy is a pillar of transformation, then our platform is a critical link – connecting policy with what is happening on the ground and bringing stakeholders and decision-makers together to drive real change.”

SLIDO POLL RESULTS

Participants expressed what they took away from the first day of the ECESP Annual Conference through a Sli.do poll.

I end this first day of the conference with:

088

Thought-provoking insights from expert speakers

18 %

A valuable new contact or two...

13 %

Enthusiasm for the networking cocktail

15 %

Excitement for what's coming up in tomorrow's discussions

13 %

A greater feeling of hope that circularity will prevail!

42 %



ANNUAL CONFERENCE

DAY 2 - 23 APRIL 2026

Summary of Day 2

The second day of the ECESP Annual Conference took place at the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The focus of the discussion was **the role of stakeholder engagement for promoting, investing in, and scaling up circular economy agenda initiatives** on the ground at local, regional and European level.

The importance of the ECESP as a network of networks for this purpose was underscored further in breakout sessions revolving around the circular bioeconomy and the upcoming CEA. In the afternoon, a series of parallel sessions took place on the themes undertaken by the ECESP Leadership Groups.

Opening

SPEAKER

- **Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea**,
Director for Competitive Circular Economy and Clean Industrial Policy, DG ENV, European Commission
- **Stoyan Tchoukanov**,
EESC NAT Section President

KEY MESSAGES

- Circular economy policy is part of a continuously evolving EU agenda, shaped by emerging challenges as circularity sits at the intersection of strategic autonomy, resilience, geopolitics and environmental protection.
- Stakeholder dialogue and platforms such as ECESP are essential to inform policymaking, gather feedback, and align priorities across institutions and actors.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Stoyan Tchoukanov
ESC NAT Section President

- The ECESP Annual Conference provides an opportunity for participants to **build concrete collaborations that go beyond this setting**.
- *"At this point in history, there should not only be a sense of urgency around the circular economy, but also a sense of emergency. Try to build something more, so we can advance faster."*

Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea
Director for Competitive Circular Economy and Clean Industrial Policy, DG ENV, European Commission

- The circular economy agenda will not stop with the CEA but will remain **dynamic and continuously shaped by new challenges and commitments**.
- *"The geopolitical situation, strategic autonomy, and the need for more resilience of the European Union should not obscure the fact that circularity is also good for the environment and for resource efficiency."*

Plenary Session 1

What role for stakeholders on the circular economy policy agenda for maximum impact

SPEAKERS

- **Maria Nikolopoulou**,
President of the Sustainable Development Observatory (EESC)
- **Ladeja Godina Kosir**,
Founder and Executive Director of Circular Change, Co-chair of the ECESP
- **Emmanuelle Maire**,
European Commission, DG Environment

OVERVIEW

This session focused on the **pivotal role that circular economy stakeholders can have in policymaking** through their experience on the ground. Actors involved in circular business models can provide practical solutions and early feedback to decision-making processes.

The importance of **stakeholders' networks** that enable structured coordination between stakeholders and policymakers was highlighted. Further, the debate reflected on the need for **tailored communication that targets the different stakeholder types**, such as finance actors, academia, citizens, and civil society.

KEY MESSAGES

- **Structured stakeholder engagement is essential for effective policymaking**, as businesses, workers, and consumers are closest to real-world challenges and can advance practical solutions. Additionally, stakeholder can provide early feedback to improve policy design and implementation.
- The ECESP provides a model of **collaborative dialogue between institutions and stakeholders**, where this relationship shifted from simple consultation to co-creation. Platforms such as ECESP enable stakeholders to actively shape circular economy policies and implementation.
- Ensuring a **fair and inclusive circular transition across Member States** is critical, with a need to improve performance and resource generation beyond the leading countries. In this context, circular economy governance must account for cultural, economic, and regional differences, recognising that Member States progress at different speeds.
- The transition requires **stronger coordination, dialogue, and mutual understanding** between stakeholders, institutions, and sectors.
- **Circularity should be treated as a systemic approach**, interconnected with other policy areas such as bioeconomy, industry, and agriculture.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS



Maria Nikolopolou, President of the Sustainable Development Observatory (EESC) and Katrina Sichel, Moderator

Maria Nikolopolou

President of the Sustainable Development Observatory (EESC)

- **Structured stakeholder engagement is fundamental** to effective circular economy policymaking, as companies, workers, and consumers are directly exposed to practical challenges and therefore best placed to identify solutions.
- *"No decision will be perfect. But having space to debate, to design policies together, will lead us to the best possible result. And this is what we are aspiring to do, this can help us find the best possible solution between conflicting interests."*
- *"The mere existence of the ECESP is proof that people do want to come together. The very complexity of it, with spaces to debate and to bring ideas, thanks to the European Commission, illustrates this willingness. This will lead to the best possible result."*

Emmanuelle Maire

European Commission, DG Environment

- Stakeholder involvement must be **structured and organised** to be effective. ECESP was created as an innovative governance model designed by the Commission to channel diverse stakeholder voices into EU policymaking. The platform enables structured feedback through its coordination group, allowing stakeholders to collectively articulate positions and provide meaningful input to the Commission.

Ladeja Godina Košir

Founder and Executive Director of Circular Change, Co-chair of the ECESP

- The ECESP fosters **co-creation between policymakers and stakeholders**. One of the platform's key strengths is its ability to translate complex, and often conflicting, realities from the ground into coherent messages for policymakers.
- Understanding **cultural and regional differences** across Europe is crucial, as policy design cannot expect progress towards circularity to be uniform across Member States.

Breakout sessions

Topic 1:

Circular bioeconomy in action: policy progress, social impact and skills for the future

SPEAKERS

- **Agnieszka Sznyk**,
ECESP Co-chair, Innovo (moderator)
- **Agata Kotkowska**,
Deputy Head of Unit, Strategic Framework for a
Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy,
European Commission
- **Nicoló Giacomuzzi-Moore**,
Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU)
- **Arnaud Schwartz**,
European Economic and Social Committee
- **Marcin Koziorowski**, EcoBean
- **Laurent Bleuze**,
Bioeconomy Manager at Coopération Agricole,
Copa-Cogeca

OVERVIEW

This session focused on the **implementation of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy** and the steps needed to scale up bio-based solutions across Europe. Speakers highlighted the growing global competition in biotechnology and bio-manufacturing, underlining the need for Europe to accelerate investment, industrialisation, and market uptake.

KEY MESSAGES

- The **Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy** was presented with key takeaways. Scaling up innovation and **overcoming the “valley of death”** between research and commercial deployment emerged as the central challenge, requiring targeted financial instruments, supportive regulation, and stronger links between research, industry, and investors.
- **Developing lead markets for bio-based products** is essential to create demand, particularly in sectors such as construction, fertilisers, textiles, packaging, and chemicals, alongside voluntary initiatives and procurement mechanisms to stimulate market uptake.
- **Sustainable and circular biomass management** is a foundational pillar of the bioeconomy. This includes efficient resource use, monitoring sourcing practices, and valorising waste streams into new products across agriculture and industry.
- **International competition and cooperation are shaping the future of the bioeconomy**, with countries such as the United States and China investing heavily in biotechnology, reinforcing the need for Europe to maintain leadership through global partnerships, trade agreements, and consistent standards.
- **The bioeconomy and circular economy are inherently interconnected**, as transitioning to secondary biomass and circular resource flows is essential for staying within planetary boundaries, strengthening competitiveness, and enabling a just and resilient economic transition.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Agata Kotkowska

Deputy Head of Unit, Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy, European Commission

- The **Strategic Framework for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy** signals a shift from **innovation to industrialisation and scale-up**. While the potential of the European bioeconomy is growing, but faces structural barriers, notably the “valley of death” between research and market deployment.
- The EU must accelerate efforts to maintain leadership in the bioeconomy amid **growing global competition**, particularly from the US and China as they are both investing heavily in the bioeconomy. In Europe, the bioeconomy remains poorly understood by financial institutions and needs to be better framed as an **economic and competitiveness opportunity**.
- The strategy is built on four pillars: **innovation and investment, lead markets, biomass management, and global cooperation**. Stronger demand creation, investment mobilisation, and coordination with Member States and industry are needed to bring solutions to market.

Laurent Bleuze

Bioeconomy Manager at Coop ration Agricole, Copa-Cogeca

- **Farmers and cooperatives play a central role in the bioeconomy** by aggregating biomass and creating value across food and non-food applications.
- **Circularity must be embedded in biomass production systems** to ensure sufficient and sustainable supply. Practical circular solutions in the bioeconomy already exist, including the use of agricultural by-products for bioethanol, fertilisers, and other value-added products.

Marcin Koziorowski

EcoBean

- **Circular business models can unlock value from waste streams**. For instance, coffee waste can be transformed into high-value products such as into food ingredients, cosmetics, and antioxidants. However, **regulatory barriers, particularly around biowaste, can significantly delay the deployment of innovative solutions**.

Nicol  Giacomuzzi-Moore

Circular Bio-based Europe Joint Undertaking (CBE JU)

- The **CBE JU plays a key role as a public-private partnership**, leveraging EU funding to support research and attract private investment. CBE JU funded projects demonstrate how bio-based value chains can repurpose materials and maximise resource efficiency.
- **Scaling up large projects remains challenging**, particularly due to the diversity of feedstocks and applications, which range from construction materials to packaging and textiles. **There is a need to better communicate existing success stories** to improve understanding and uptake of the bioeconomy in Europe.

Arnaud Schwartz

European Economic and Social Committee

- The bioeconomy is essential to transitioning away from fossil-based systems. Policy should ensure that fossil-based models become less economically attractive compared to bio-based alternatives.
- *“In a global market where competitors do not always respect the same standards, the **EU must defend the rules that protect our businesses and ensure fair competition**, so that products produced under lower standards do not undercut sustainable European solutions.”*



Topic 2:

Circular Economy Act: stakeholder priorities for Europe's circular transition

SPEAKERS

- **William Neale**, European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment
- **Domantas Tracevičius**, European Economic and Social Committee
- **Ladeja Godina Košir**, ECESP Chair, Circular Change
- **Claire Downey**, The Rediscovery Centre
- **Brigitte Mouligneau**, Circular Flanders

OVERVIEW

This session examined **stakeholder priorities for the CEA**, focusing on how EU policy can boost demand, address structural barriers, and support practical implementation. It highlighted the need to align regulation, markets, and skills to make circular solutions viable and scalable across the EU.

KEY MESSAGES

- Unstable supply leads to **unstable demand** for circular materials. **Public procurement, eco-design, and extended producer responsibility** can play a key role but must be carefully designed to avoid mismatches between demand and available supply, which could lead to increased imports or price distortions.
- **Circularity requires systemic change**: better integration across value chains, industrial symbiosis, and a shift from linear supply chains to interconnected networks.
- The **circular economy has significant potential to create quality jobs**, particularly in reuse, repair, and remanufacturing activities. However, this requires stronger demand signals, better recognition of skills and qualifications, and targeted support for workforce development.
- **Civil society and local initiatives** play a crucial role in driving the implementation of circularity. Policymaking must integrate relevant actors and support relevant initiatives through funding and capacity building.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

William Neale

European Commission,
Directorate-General for Environment

- **Circularity must be addressed across multiple policy areas**, requiring tailored tools for different materials and sectors due to varying supply and demand dynamics.
- **Industrial symbiosis and better information sharing** can help connect waste streams with industrial use, improving competitiveness and resource efficiency.
- *"Waste is a resource on its own – and like any resource, fluctuations in its availability will impact the demand for it. If the supply is unreliable, demand will remain low."*

Domantas Tracevičius

European Economic and Social Committee

- The **CEA should strengthen EU competitiveness** by reducing dependencies on critical raw materials and supporting a functioning internal market.
- **Civil society plays a key role in shaping policy**, monitoring implementation, and driving ambition at both national and EU levels. It is crucial to achieve a **just transition**, ensuring that sectors such as mining and manufacturing are supported and not left behind.



Ladeja Godina Košir, ECEP Chair, Circular Change
speaking to a participant

Ladeja Godina Košir

ECEP Chair, Circular Change

- Effective policymaking depends on **balancing detailed, sector-specific insights with a broader systemic perspective**. Scaling circularity is less about growing individual initiatives and more about connecting, mapping, and strengthening networks of local actors into coherent systems.

Claire Downey

The Rediscovery Centre

- **Reuse and repair sectors offer significant job creation potential** within the circular economy, but this depends on stronger demand signals and better recognition of skills to make these professions viable and attractive.
- As **social enterprises and local initiatives play a growing role in delivering circular solutions**, policymakers need to offer them strong support and visibility.

Brigitte Mouligneau

ECEP Chair, Circular Change

- *“Procurement rules should be changed from focusing on ‘lowest cost’ to something else, such as ‘lowest lifecycle cost’, ‘most impact’, or ‘most circular and sustainable solution’. Is the cheapest today really the cheapest in the long term?”*

Reporting and wrap up

- A **stronger focus on implementation** is needed, supported by new funding instruments, alliances, and the EU Bioeconomy Strategy to scale up solutions effectively.
- **Social acceptance, education, and a just transition** are critical to ensure the uptake of bio-based solutions across sectors and regions.
- Better **alignment between supply and demand is essential**. In this context, policymaking must balance barriers that are sector-specific with cross-cutting challenges.
- **Civil society plays a key role** in designing, implementing and sharing circular practices. These actors require stronger support, including skill recognition to support the creation of quality jobs.



Parallel Workshops

LG 1: Transition brokers in circular value networks – an emerging profession

SPEAKERS

- **Stoyan Tchoukanov**,
European Economic and Social Committee, Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment Section President
- **Ladeja Godina Košir**,
Moderator, Founder and Executive Director of Circular Change, Co-chair of the ECESP Coordination Group
- **Julian Lauten-Weiss**,
Moderator, Academics for Circular Economy (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Johanna Suikkanen**,
Sitra (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Lars Mortensen**,
European Environment Agency
- **Lisa Capovilla**,
Circul'R (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)

OVERVIEW

This session explored the emerging role of transition brokers in enabling the shift from linear value chains to circular value networks. Through practical examples and stakeholder discussion, participants examined how these actors can facilitate coordination, governance, and scaling of circular solutions. The discussion highlighted the need to better define, professionalise, and support this role across policy, business, and education systems.

KEY MESSAGES

- **Transition brokers** are emerging as key actors that can navigate complex circular value networks. They act as intermediaries and facilitators, enabling collaboration and communication across different stakeholders.
- There is a need to **formalise and professionalise the role of transition brokers**, including integrating it into education systems, recognising it within organisations, and developing clear skill profiles and career pathways.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Stoyan Tchoukanov

European Economic and Social Committee, Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment Section President

- The transition broker role should be further developed and promoted as an attractive career path, particularly for younger generations.

Lars Mortensen

European Environment Agency

- Circular business models are not scaling sufficiently, highlighting the need for transition brokers to support implementation and system-wide change. Different forms of scaling – out, up, and deep – require coordination and enabling policy conditions to succeed.

Johanna Suikkanen

Sitra (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)

- Transition brokers play a key role in connecting actors across sectors and geographies, including linking European and global circular economy initiatives.
- They must understand financing mechanisms and be able to connect businesses with funding opportunities.

Jean Billant

- Practical experience shows that transition brokers must combine sector understanding, regulatory awareness, and neutrality when facilitating collaboration.

LG 2: From vision to implementation: scaling the circular bioeconomy across european value chains

SPEAKERS

- **Marianne Kettunen**,
Moderator, Ellen MacArthur Foundation
(part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Tobias Nielsen**, European Environment Agency
- **Miha Škrokov**, VCG.AI
- **Caroline Ploux**, Mars
- **Agnieszka Sznyk**, ECESP Co-chair, Innovo
- **Nora Sophie Griefahn**, Cradle2Cradle NGO
- **Sidse Jensen**, FSC Danmark
- **Christina Fedato**,
Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption
and Production (CSCP)
(part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Arnaud Schwartz**,
European Economic and Social Committee

OVERVIEW

This session focused on how to accelerate the deployment of regenerative and circular solutions across biological value chains, ensuring that bio-based activities operate within planetary boundaries and support the EU climate and nature objectives while strengthening competitiveness and innovation. Best practice examples were discussed, including ecosystem-sharing initiatives, bio-based resource tools, industrial symbiosis, and stakeholder roadmaps.

KEY MESSAGES

- Europe already has a growing ecosystem of initiatives, projects, and regional strategies supporting circular bioeconomy solutions. However, significant challenges remain in scaling implementation, connecting stakeholders across sectors, and translating policy ambition into practical tools and market solutions.
- By 2050, Europe could face a 40–70% shortfall in bio-based materials, increasing reliance on imports. As such, EU funding, including regional and cohesion funding, should prioritise the integration of circular economy principles in the bioeconomy.
- Data-driven approaches, certification systems, and supportive governance frameworks can unlock circular bio-based solutions by improving decision-making, enabling investment, and strengthening trust across value chains. At the same time, bottom-up approaches remain crucial as meaningful stakeholder engagement is needed to guarantee the social legitimacy of innovation.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Arnaud Schwartz

European Economic and Social Committee

- Regional collaboration and the use of cohesion funds demonstrate the potential for scaling circular bioeconomy solutions, particularly in supporting agricultural transitions and aligning stakeholders around shared objectives.

Tobias Nielsen

European Environment Agency

- A significant share of bio-based waste remains underutilised, and only a small proportion of the European biomass feedstock is used circularly (around 10%). This highlights the need for a strong and sustainable bioeconomy, centring on circularity.

Marianne Kettunen

Moderator, Ellen MacArthur Foundation
(part of the ECESP Coordination Group)

- There are five circular economy principles that must be applied to bio-based resources: ensuring regenerative sourcing from secondary stream feedstocks; safety in manufacturing by avoiding the use of substances of concern; cascading use to allow reuse in lower-grade applications; design for material recovery at the end of use; development of fair and inclusive value chains both in the EU and globally.
- Bottom-up approaches are essential to guarantee the social legitimacy of the transition. Decision-making must be based on collaboration across stakeholder networks and shared long-term goals.

Christina Fedato

Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP) (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)

- Strengthening governance models through participatory approaches, stakeholder engagement, and local capacity building is essential to close implementation gaps and support circular bioeconomy transitions across regions.

Nora Sophie Griefahn

Cradle2Cradle NGO

- Systems thinking and design approaches, such as Cradle to Cradle, emphasise the need for safe materials, continuous cycles, and cross-sector collaboration to create regenerative and circular systems.

Sidse Jensen

FSC Danmark

- The FSC Circularity Hub showcases that unlocking circular bio-based solutions requires smart and responsible sourcing, removal of market barriers, and strong collaboration across industry, academia, and policy to enable large-scale adoption.

Miha Škrokov

VCG.AI

- Data-driven tools can support scaling by identifying optimal locations and conditions for circular bioeconomy investments. Key indicators that are useful for these purposes include infrastructure availability, costs such as energy and labour, and environmental factors. Crucially, models must be applicable to different value chain stages and geographical regions.

Caroline Ploux

Mars

- Industry perspectives highlight the importance of cascading use and “food-first” principles, as increasing competition for by-products can create tensions between sectors and challenge resource allocation.

LG 3: Building an inclusive circular society - new skills, sustainable behaviours, concrete actions

SPEAKERS

- **Rosa Strube**, Moderator Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Dirk Bergrath**, Vice-President of the European Economic and Social Committee's Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption
- **Zuzana Kuberova**, Reuse Federace
- **Benoit Ruysschaert**, city of Hasselt
- **Rebecca Wilson**, Rediscovery Centre (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)

OVERVIEW

This session explored how the circular economy delivers concrete, everyday benefits for citizens, including more affordable services, healthier living environments, and local job opportunities. The discussion emphasised the social dimension of circularity by reflecting on how inclusion-by-design can strengthen participation, fairness and wellbeing alongside environmental gains.

By looking at three lighthouse examples from different initiatives and European regions, the panel explored practical pathways for reskilling and upskilling, creating communities that last, shifting behaviours, and engaging hard-to-reach communities through trusted intermediaries and locally grounded solutions.

KEY MESSAGES

- The **circular economy has a strong social dimension**. In particular, circular approaches can improve outcomes for vulnerable groups and reduce inequalities in access to goods, services and opportunities.
- Three EU models demonstrate a social circular economy with a scale-up potential: **Czech furniture banks** aim for one facility per region by 2027, redistributing bulky goods through trusted social workers; **Belgian Deelfabriek** operates a 1,000-bike library serving 500+ members (25% receive city subsidy) plus a tool library, all volunteer-run; **Ireland's Rediscovery Center** runs National Circular Incubator training social enterprises in repair/reuse sectors.
- **Circular transition requires social inclusion first**: Jobs must be safe, fairly paid, and stable with re-skilling built into transition early; social dialogue between workers and employers ensures change is managed fairly, not treated as damage control later.
- The **scaling challenge** entails balancing standardisation for efficiency (digital tools, shared processes) with place-based value through network models – umbrella organisations supporting diverse local approaches, training facilitators rather than centralised staff, and developing standards bottom-up with practitioners not through top-down mandates.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Zuzana Kuberova

Reuse Federace

- **Practical barriers to reuse remain** significant, particularly due to the lack of infrastructure for handling bulky items like furniture, despite growing social demand. In this context, **furniture banks**, supported by social workers and digital tools, help to meet people's needs. However, this and similar social initiatives require cultural shifts, stable financing, and stronger systems to scale effectively.
- Extended Producer Responsibility schemes should finance reuse and circular activities involving communities, creating job opportunities.

Benoit Ruysschaert

City of Hasselt

- **Local initiatives**, such as **sharing and repair schemes**, can create inclusive spaces that engage diverse groups, including volunteers, refugees, and elderly people. These **contribute to social cohesion and community building**. However, the economic disadvantage of circular products with respect to linear ones remains a key challenge to address.
- Bikes as everyday objects are integral to Belgian culture for play and school transport. A reduced membership model enables participation regardless of financial situation.

Rebecca Wilson

Rediscovery Centre

(part of the ECESP Coordination Group)

- **Building inclusive circular systems requires long-term investment in trust, skills, and community engagement**, combining local initiatives with national support structures such as incubators and funding schemes.
- Circular economy is often presented as **technical and abstract**; using active language to teach it, like "repair and reuse" makes it understandable and fun. The Rediscovery Centre translates policy language into relevant stories and removes jargon.

LG 4: From policy to investment: operationalising circular economy through economic and financial instruments

SPEAKERS

- **Andrei Geica**, Moderator, Sporos Platform (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Anders Ladefoged**, European Economic and Social Committee
- **Anita Lombardo**, ACR+ (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Hubert Bukowski**, INNOWO (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Laura Cutaia**, Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA)
- **Priya Saikumar**, Academics for Circular Economy (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Nick Davids**, Circular Flanders (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Jean Billant**, Circul'R (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Marcel Herbst**, NEXIA Group Holdings
- **Marvin Nusseck**, Circle Economy
- **Beatriz Vidal**, European Environment Agency (EEA)
- **Marina Manti**, European Financial Reporting Advisory Group (EFRAG)

OVERVIEW

Leadership Group 4 focuses on one central challenge: translating circular economy from a policy ambition into an economically viable and investable reality. This session focused on the critical challenge of translating circular economy ambitions into investable and scalable business realities. The discussion explored how economic instruments, financial actors, and regulatory frameworks can be better aligned to unlock investment and operationalise circularity across sectors. The objective was to identify blind spots in the current approaches as well as complementarities, gathering inputs on how to overcome practical bottlenecks and investment barriers.

KEY MESSAGES

- There is a systemic misalignment between how the circular economy functions and how markets are structured. **Circular values do not easily translate into financial language**, particularly in terms of investment risk and their understanding.
- **Current economic frameworks remain structurally biased towards linear models.** Policy instruments such as EPR have not yet delivered sufficient upstream impact on product design and circularity. In addition, taxation is geared to the linear economy. This highlights the **need for Member States to shift their economic policy.**
- Unlocking investment requires **clearer communication of the business case for circularity.** In particular, **measuring circularity is essential to make it investable.** Standardised metrics, reporting frameworks, and certification systems can reduce uncertainty and improve investor confidence.

LG 5: Buy re/made in Europe: a buyers' perspective on circularity

SPEAKERS

- **Aura Iurascu**,
Moderator, Postdoctoral Researcher
- **Domantas Tracevičius**,
European Economic and Social Committee
- **Anouk Verhaege**,
Public Waste Agency of Flanders
- **Cynthia Reynolds**,
the Circular Economy Coalition
- **Bart Vanterwyngen**,
TVH parts and accessories
- **Joanne Rourke**, Dublin city

OVERVIEW

This session explored the role of buyers in advancing the circular economy, with a particular focus on the role of circular procurement and Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in shaping sustainable markets. It explored how the CEA can strengthen EPR schemes, encouraging producers to design products with their full lifecycle in mind and motivating buyers to prioritise circular solutions. Through interactive polls and discussion, participants will reflect on challenges and opportunities in applying circular principles. Overall, the session aimed to equip buyers with knowledge and tools to drive Europe's circular economy transition.

KEY MESSAGES

- There is often a **linguistic and contextual barrier**, with a lack of shared vocabulary even within scientific and policy communities. Circular literacy is therefore essential for public buyers to recognise and adopt green alternatives. For instance, there is persistent misconception that circular solutions are always more expensive, despite evidence that repair and reuse models can often be cheaper than linear alternatives
- Circular procurement and EPR are critical tools to shift markets from linear to circular models, influencing both demand and product design across value chains. These policies need to be supported by building specific circular and digital skills among buyers, while also guaranteeing stakeholder engagement in decision-making.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Cynthia Reynolds

The Circular Economy Coalition

- There is a significant skills gap in public procurement limiting its strategic use. Despite 14% of EU GDP flows through public procurement, the Letta Report warned that buyers still lack core circular, digital, and transversal skills such as supplier engagement, impact measurement, and social criteria integration.

Joanne Rourke

Dublin city

- In Ireland, Green Public Procurement (GPP) has made significant progress. In 2023, 40% of in-scope contracts for government Depts included green criteria, representing 82% of the total value of in-scope contracts. Accelerating GPP implementation requires more targeted training for public procurement managers.

Bart Vanterwyngen

TVH parts and accessories

- Remanufacturing creates economic value, strengthens industrial networks, and delivers environmental benefits while ensuring product quality and reliability.

Closing plenary

De-risking circularity: who pays for the transition?

SPEAKERS

- **Ladeja Godina Košir**,
Founder and Executive Director of Circular Change
& Co-chair of the ECESP Coordination Group
- **Lars Mortensen**,
Expert on sustainability, circular economy and wellbeing economy,
European Environmental Agency
- **Dario Barcella**,
Circular Economy Co-Coordinator, Generation Climate Europe
(part of the ECESP Coordination Group)
- **Emmanuel Chaponnière**,
Head of Division at the European Investment Bank

OVERVIEW

The closing plenary focused on how to distribute risks and costs of the circular transition in a fair way across society, while also enabling investment and scaling.

KEY MESSAGES

- The **circular economy transition is a shared responsibility across society**, including governments, business, finance, civil society, and citizens. Moving towards a “one market, one Europe, one society” approach means distributing risk and fostering stronger collaboration across actors.
- Fairness and social acceptance are essential, with the transition needing to avoid placing disproportionate costs on vulnerable groups. **Circularity must be accessible and framed as a right, with costs shifted away from end users.**
- Policy and narratives must **link circularity to wellbeing, competitiveness, and resilience, not just environmental goals**. Success depends on coordination across stakeholders, clearer communication, and integrating youth and cross-sector perspectives.
- **Financing is a key enabler, requiring a mix of public and private instruments, including grants, venture capital, and debt finance**. The European Investment Bank and wider financial system will play an important role as the CEA aims to unlock investment.

SPEAKERS' CONTRIBUTIONS



Dario Barcella, Circular Economy Co-Coordinator, Generation Climate Europe.

Ladeja Godina Košir

Founder and Executive Director of Circular Change
& Co-chair of the ECESP Coordination Group

- *"The risk factor of changing from the linear to the circular economic model should be distributed across all levels of stakeholders. One Market, One Europe, One Society: at this stage, sharing the risks across society is necessary, otherwise no one would take it on."*

Dario Barcella

Circular Economy Co-Coordinator, Generation Climate Europe (part of the ECESP Coordination Group)

- The social acceptability of the transition is a key topic, as high costs risk excluding vulnerable groups. Policy design must be inclusive and shift costs upstream to ensure that circularity is accessible and fair for all.

Emmanuel Chaponnière

Head of Division at the European Investment Bank

- *"Circular economy is not scaling up because its competing against the linear economy on an unfair basis. Now, narratives are starting to change. Dependencies are becoming more expensive, which is an argument against the linear economy."*
- The CEA must therefore aim at aligning financial flows with policy priorities, enabling investment across the full financing spectrum from public funding to venture capital and banking.

SLIDO POLL RESULTS

At the end of the second day of the ECESP Annual Conference, participants expressed what they took away after two days of discussion via a Sli.do poll.

After two days at this conference, I go away:

077

With the contact details of a potential new collaborator/partner
30 %

Speaking fluent Circularity
3 %

Stuffed with new knowledge
12 %

Motivated to help turn circular economy ambition into impact on the ground
18 %

Inspired by a like-minded community of circular economy actors
38 %