



## Circular economy roadmapping

### Overview

In 2016, Finland produced the world's first national circular economy roadmap. The Finnish innovation fund Sitra has come up with a [guide](#) on how to create such a national circular economy roadmap.

Main elements of a CE roadmap by Kari Herlevi, SITRA

- **Prepare the groundwork and preconditions:** not just a task for governments, but also for other stakeholders such as NGOs.
  - **Involve and listen to stakeholders.** Commitment in society is vital and it is important to encourage ownership and look outside the box. Whoever takes the lead has to be a neutral player, someone who is respected and can ensure that the roadmap is just and fair from a social point of view.
  - It is **essential to know where a country stands** currently in terms of circularity.
  - **Having vision and goals:** these need to be ambitious and based on metrics. Look for things that are harder to evaluate, rather than more obvious areas such as recycling targets.
  - **Identify the focus areas;** limitless possibilities that need to be **narrowed down** and **based on a country's strengths and goals**.
  - **Planning of actions** and all such actions **must have owners**. Once drawn up, it is essential to **communicate the plan in a way that motivates others**, with a "circular economy story" that **inspires people to connect**.
  - **Implementing:** the success or failure of the roadmap is often decided at this stage, with not enough **emphasis placed on who is taking the lead and how to implement it**.
  - **Not a one-off process.** It must be evaluated and updated if necessary.
- For roadmaps **to be developed, cooperation is key**. They have to be agile and flexible **to respond to changing circumstances** and it is vital to **invest in execution** and to **think beyond the strategy** itself.

- The main lesson of the **Slovenian national circular economy roadmap experience** (introduced in 2017) and **stakeholder engagement** is that "**only through collaboration, and by sharing a joint vision, is it possible to move forward**" **Ladeja Godina Košir, Circular Change**.

A "**circular triangle**" was introduced, emphasising the need to address **three specific points**:

1. **Circular culture** which includes individuals, NGOs and everything embedded in everyday life.
2. **Circular economy** and the business sector – an important stakeholder behind the transition.
3. **Circular change** and the promotion of a systemic approach, with a need for governments to support the transition through measurements, regulation, incentives and the taxation system.

## Engaging stakeholders – Key stages in this process

- **Mapping**: it is essential to see who is doing what and to identify influencers as well as decision-makers.
  - **Motivate and engage people**: they need to know what is in it for them and to be given a good reason to join and invest their time in the process.
  - **Create a "safe space"** where people feel free to express their interests and views.
  - **Assign an "orchestrator"** to oversee things, someone to take care of the process and nourish dialogue in a transparent way.
  - **Feedback is crucial**, as is internal and external **communication**, both with those playing an active role and those who are involved more indirectly.
  - **Celebrate what has been achieved and promote shared ownership**, acknowledging everyone who has contributed to the process.
  - **Build communities** in order to ensure longer-term benefits and successful implementation of the roadmap.
- **The importance of measuring circularity and how the outcomes of this can help governments achieve circular ambitions**, by **Hatty Cooper, Circle Economy**.  
In 2017, Circle Economy developed a circularity metric, making it possible to identify a country's current level of circularity and, in so doing, its circularity gap. These measurements provide a starting point and an understanding of what is needed in which sectors, in order to accelerate a circular transition, with metrics to track progress throughout the process. They help provide decision-makers with the evidence base for setting ambitious targets and a compass for achieving them in a measurable and actionable way.
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  - **The role of overarching policy goals** in order to provide a basis for multi-stakeholder engagement, and with a view to delivering transformative change **and how to focus on specific sectors** when developing national circular economy roadmaps, by **Carsten Wacholz, Ellen MacArthur Foundation**.
    - **Ensuring appropriate design** at the outset and moving from managing waste to looping resources.
    - **Focus on specific circular projects** but take account of the enabling economics around them.

- **Invest in infrastructure, innovation and skills.**
  - **Break down barriers and think in terms of systems.** Silo thinking is the biggest threat. Sectors such as plastics and textiles, for example, are closely interlinked.
- **When deciding which sectors to focus on, there are two main criteria:**
    1. how important a sector is within the national economy;
    2. its circularity potential, as opportunities, barriers, stakeholders and policy options differ significantly across sectors.
  - "One practical and quick solution to best implement a circular economy is the **Circular Acceleration Houses**" - **Siegfried Anton Schmuck, Ecopreneur**. These provide support for SMEs in all European regions and Member States, education and information on subjects such as circular design, offer collaboration and advocacy platforms by matching supply and demand for circular solutions, provide business support and tools with advice on regulatory and financial support, and ensure collaboration at European level. An important point is that they must take account of regional circumstances, providing a tailor-made approach.
  - **The impact on regulation and reforms, taking France as an example, by Marline Weber, INEC.** In France, work on a roadmap started in 2017 and the approach was to involve as many stakeholders as possible. The process covered four areas: individuals and consumers, local authorities, businesses, and state and public actors with regard to public procurement. The roadmap gave rise to a need for a circular economy law and France was one of the first countries to adopt such a law in February 2020.

## Main messages

- Circular economy solutions will become trendy, accessible, affordable and desirable. Communication is crucial and plays a significant role in the roadmapping process. By sharing experiences and lessons learned – using the principles of storytelling – we can speed up the circular transformation process in different countries within Europe and beyond. The role of the ECESP is key, offering (digital) space and different tools for multi-stakeholder engagement and encouraging dialogue by providing various tools and formats

## New Challenges

- When trying to go circular, SMEs face **barriers**: complexity of circular design; access to funding; lack of transparency throughout the value chain; lack of demand for low-carbon circular economy products and services; regulatory barriers; and lack of price incentives, consumer awareness, collaborative networks, national examples of successful circular companies, circular metrics and green business advocacy.
- Working towards **100% circularity** within a single country is an ambitious goal, made challenging by the fact that circularity stretches beyond national borders, with developments in one country having an impact on others. It needs to be backed up by specific goals and visions, as it is easier to develop a vision for targeted areas.
- When it comes to **circular culture**, solutions cannot simply be copy-pasted from one country to another, as values and cultures differ and so a sensitive approach must be adopted.

It is important to make it a desirable subject in schools. What is more, the COVID-19 crisis has made people more open to circular solutions and more aware of how they consume.

- The **relationship between circular economy and nature**; the biological cycle of materials and products, rather than just the technical cycle, is also an integral part of the circular economy, and links between biodiversity and circular economy would be the next major area in the search for solutions. Currently this is being explored within the framework of the BIOEAST initiative.

## Success story

- One of the highlights of **Finland's experience** is its focus **on education**. There are currently 100 000 children and students learning about the circular economy and Finland has the highest number of circular economy courses in higher education. Another aspect is the **emphasis on engagement**, with workshops organised and a broad community of people involved that goes beyond the usual stakeholders.