

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



European
Circular Economy
Stakeholder Platform

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP), established in 2017 by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the European Commission, contributes to accelerating the circular economy transition in Europe. ECESP supports businesses, civil society organisations and public authorities accelerating the transition to a circular economy across Europe by fostering dialogue, sharing knowledge and expertise and exchanging good practices with a website, annual conference and regular activities such as thematic workshops or studies.

The Platform looks back positively on 2021. A busy - if atypical - year, it saw the launch of a new work plan for the Coordination Group, the successful implementation of the #EUCircularTalks, participation in international events such as the World Circular Economy Forum, the IUCN World Congress and the Glasgow Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP26), the preparation of the Leadership Groups' presentation at the Dubai Expo, and many joint activities of the Coordination Group members together with other stakeholders from Europe's circular economy community.

The EESC, represented by its 3 Members, and the European Commission, through DG ENV and DG RTD, have worked closely with the Coordination Group's Leadership Groups to keep the momentum going with the #EUCircularTalks. The digital road of these Talks is ensuring that their work feeds into the 2022 stakeholder conference.

It should be noted that this year too, the ECESP online community has continued to grow through the website's communication channels, Twitter, LinkedIn and the newsletter. Despite the continuing challenges posed by the Covid-related health and economic crisis, there were also opportunities to reach out to a wider audience across the continent via the ECESP online channels. In fact, the health measures reinforced the use of digital methods in the Platform's activities, resulting in the Platform's online presence growing on average by 30% on all its communication channels. The lessons learnt will also apply if there is a recovery in 2022.



COORDINATION GROUP

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

The Platform Secretariat received more than one hundred applications from stakeholder organisations to join the new CG with a view to delivering the Platform's objectives, promoting the circular economy and fostering debate among the circular economy community for the 2020-2023 term. In November 2020, the ECESP announced its new Coordination Group (CG) who met for the first time online.

The new CG members met together online for the second time in March 2021, where they presented their prioritised topics for the year, dedicated to advancing the circular economy and bringing together the circular economy community. The CG is working to advance the circular economy in key areas considered essential for the transition, based on their collective experience and exchanges with other

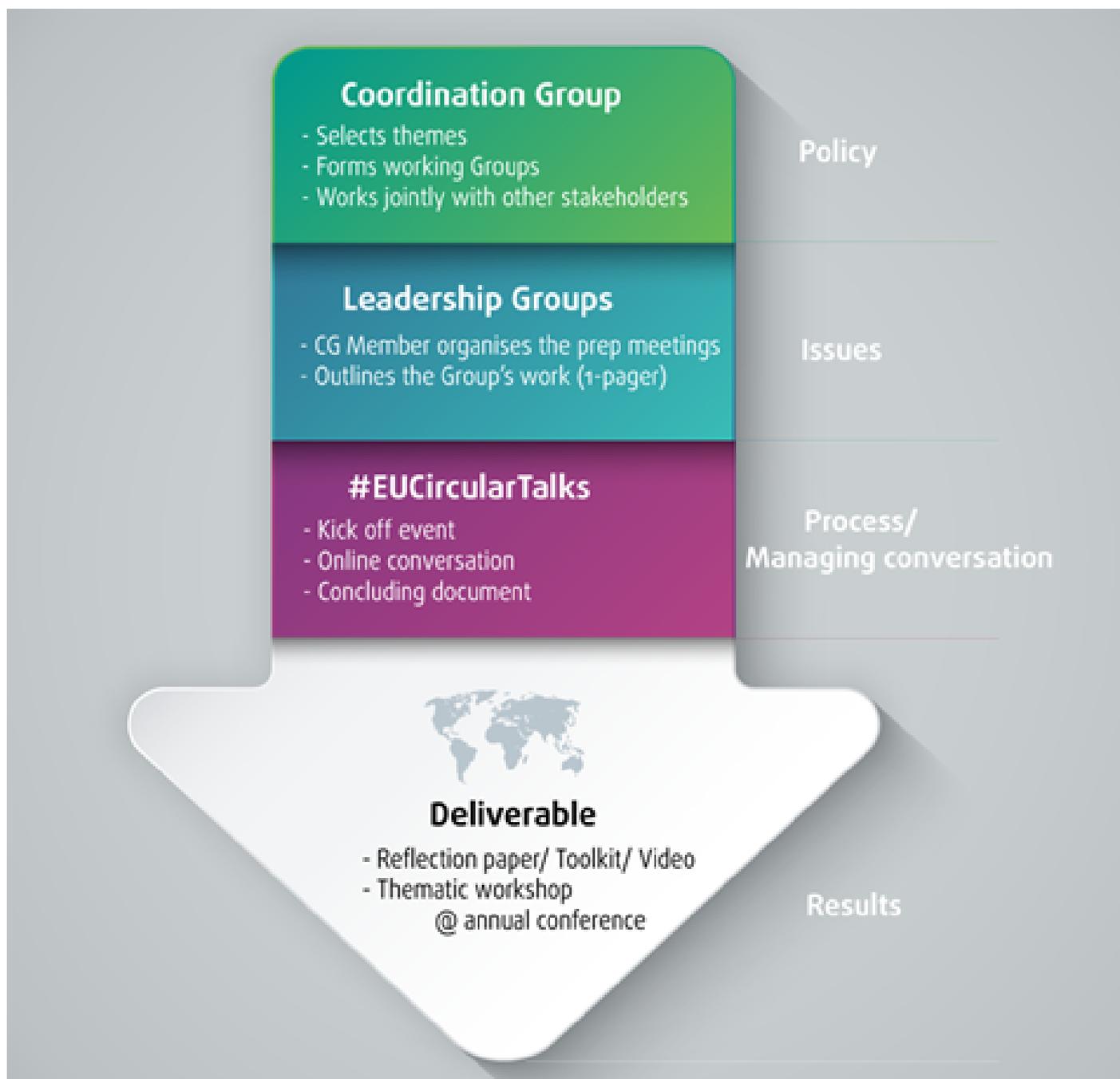
stakeholders. The key areas are summarised under eight thematic headings:

- Retailers, Consumer and Skills
- Cities and Regions
- Circular Procurement
- Food waste, Food systems and Bioeconomy
- Construction and Infrastructure
- Textiles
- Network Governance and Circular Economy Hubs
- Economic Incentives

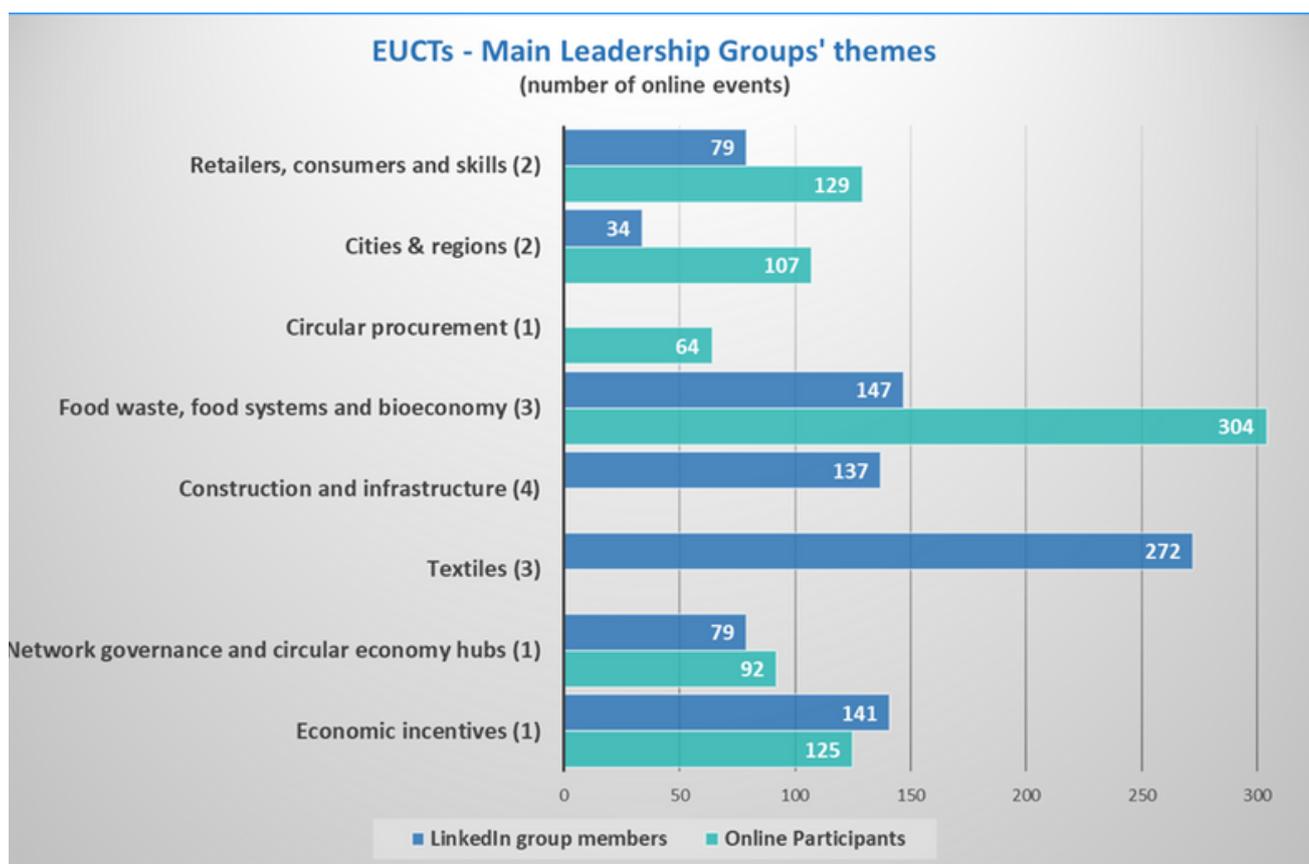
In order to work on and bring these topics to the circular economy community, the Coordination Group formed thematic working groups called Leadership Groups (LG). While the LGs are made up of members from other sectoral stakeholders, the CG provides leadership. Each LG has engaged with many additional networks, strengthening the Platform's contribution to the implementation of the 2020 Circular Economy Action Plan. Other key areas that the CG members worked on are for instance focusing on the contribution of the circular economy transition towards achieving international targets on climate and biodiversity.

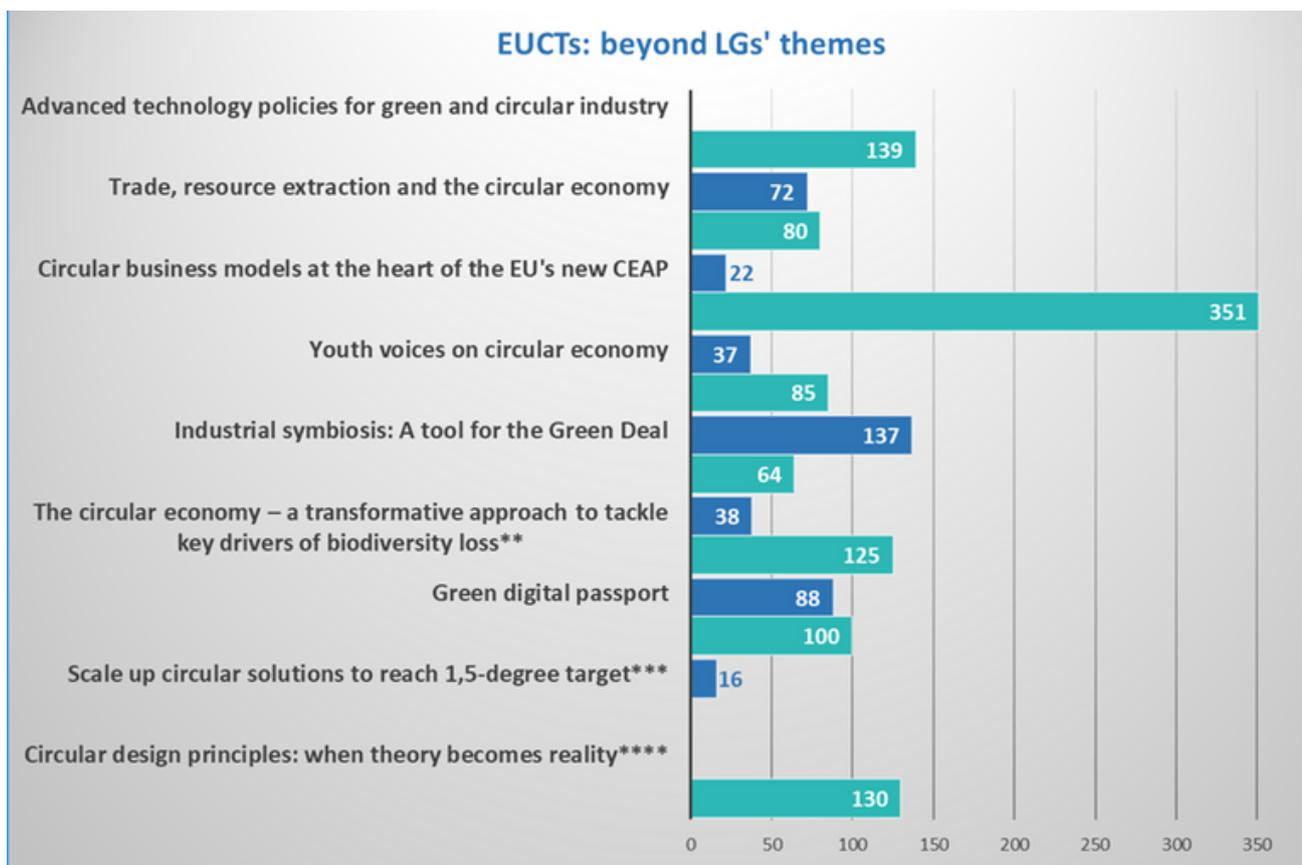
The LGs, CG members and stakeholders made full use of EU Circular Talks (#EUCircularTalks), through which the Platform discusses the chosen topics and brings together circular economy stakeholders and experts to identify bottlenecks and opportunities. The EU Circular Talks concept, officially launched during the Platform's 2020 annual conference by Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, is implemented in three phases, featuring:

- i) a digital event (a classical webinar, a policy talk or a more in-depth technical workshop),
 - ii) an online dialogue on social media before or after the event, before the process results in:
 - iii) an outcome document such as a toolkit, reflection paper or video clips.
- It also serves as a platform to exchange good practices by pointing out achievable outcomes for both stakeholders and policymakers.



The #EUCircularTalks bring together the circular economy community to participate in dynamic dialogues. Each event comprises a comprehensive, result-focused debate. The 2021 cycle entailed 26 Talks in total, seventeen of which were organised by the Leadership Groups. The collaboration between CG members and members of the circular economy community active in the Leadership Groups provided valuable links with a wide spectrum of stakeholders. The infographics below gives the statistics on the #EUCircularTalks in a nutshell.





** part of the IUCN World Conservation Congress

*** Part of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26)

**** LinkedIn Group = Consumers LG's

These and other Coordination Group initiatives, organised along the main pillars of the CG mandate, enacted the CG's designated role of acting as ECESP ambassadors, fostering debate, exchanging good practices and knowledge, and promoting interaction among stakeholders. In addition, by working together on the Work plan and Leadership Groups, the Coordination Group delivered more than 50 initiatives, published on the website (CG Activities).

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

In 2021, it was agreed not to hold a conference given the ongoing uncertainties of the pandemic. Instead, during the CG meeting of March 2021 it was decided to focus on a more ambitious stakeholder conference in early 2022. Highlights of the 2021 #EUCircularTalks will pave the way to the next conference in the form of a "digital pathway".

The Leadership Groups' Reflection Papers will feed into the debate by the eight workshops, to be organised by the Coordination Group on Day 2 of the conference. Other results from the CG members' work with other key areas outside the LGs may also feed into the conference.

COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

The Platform acts as a "network of networks". It provides a meeting place for stakeholders to share and scale up practical solutions and address specific challenges related to the circular economy. The Platform's main communication activities are set out in its terms of reference under Pillar II (the annual conference) and Pillar III (web and digital communications).

Web and digital communications

The global pandemic accelerated the digital transformation for many sectors, and digital channels became the new norm in a post-pandemic society. In its terms of reference, the Platform assigned a core place to digital matters by making the website its third pillar. The health measures reinforced the use of digital methods in the Platform's activities. There was an increase in terms of users or visits on all ECESP communication channels in 2021.

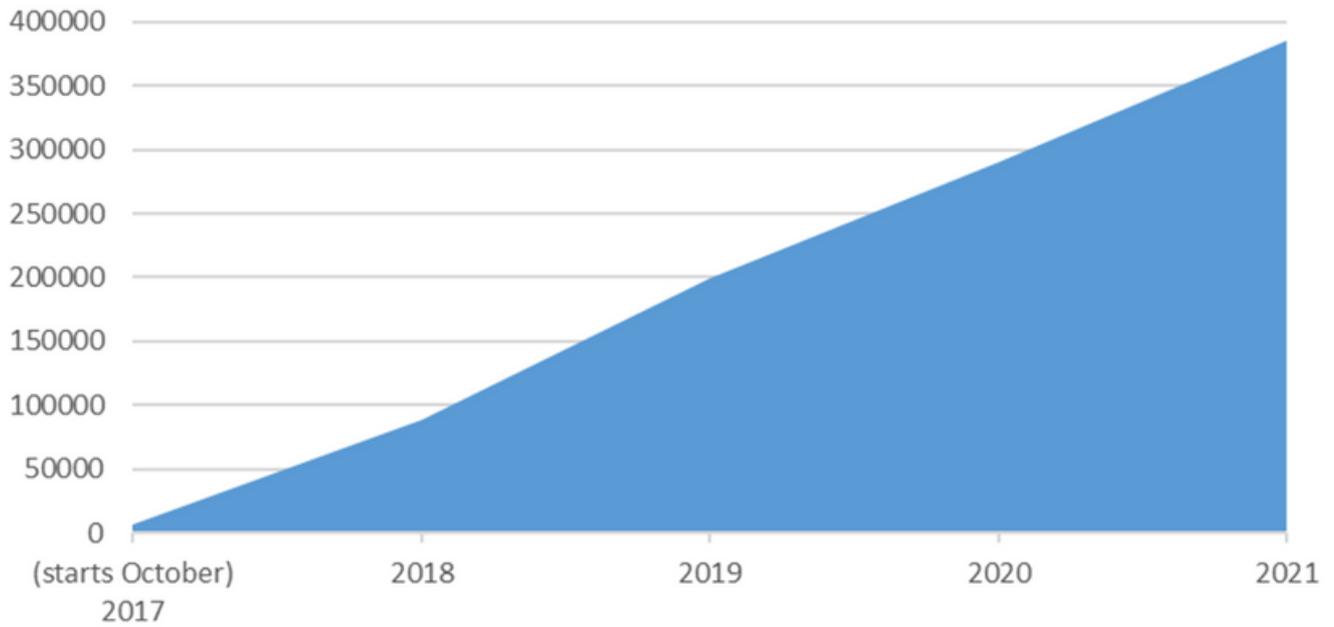
WEBSITE

The ECESP launched its virtual platform in November 2017. The EESC hosts the website, and the ECESP Secretariat is responsible for daily management. Since its launch, the Platform has undergone a series of additions and modifications reflecting the website users' needs and the circular economy community.

The virtual platform

(circulareconomy.europa.eu) has continued to grow into a digital one-stop-shop on the circular economy, becoming a benchmark in Europe. The ECESP website is the Platform's main communication channel with the stakeholders and the circular economy community in general, used primarily during the pandemic to communicate about the Platform's activities.

Web traffic progression: cumulated visits since launch

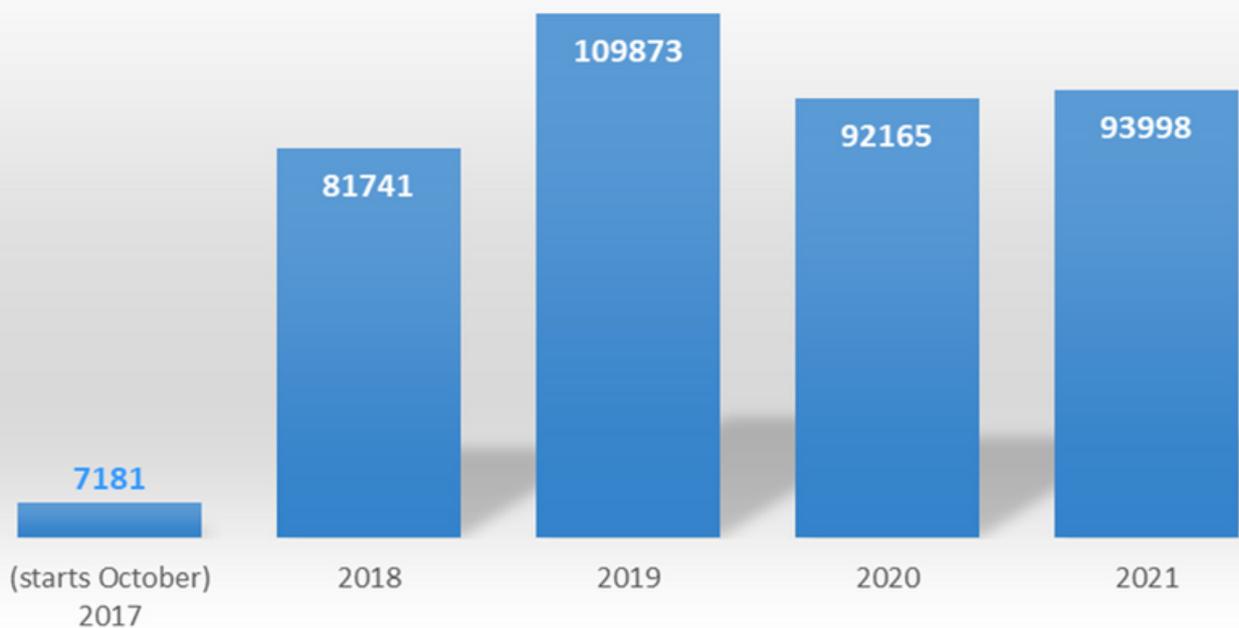


Since its launch in 2017, the website has received close to 385,000 visits. This number represents a 32% increase compared to 2020.

After a decrease in the number of visits for 2020, the Platform experienced a more positive trend in 2021.

There were over 94,000 visits on the website in 2021, representing a 2% increase compared to 2020.

Web traffic progression: yearly visits



If the organisation of the Platform’s annual conference could explain the increase in previous years, this could not be the case in place in 2021 as the event was postponed to March 2022.

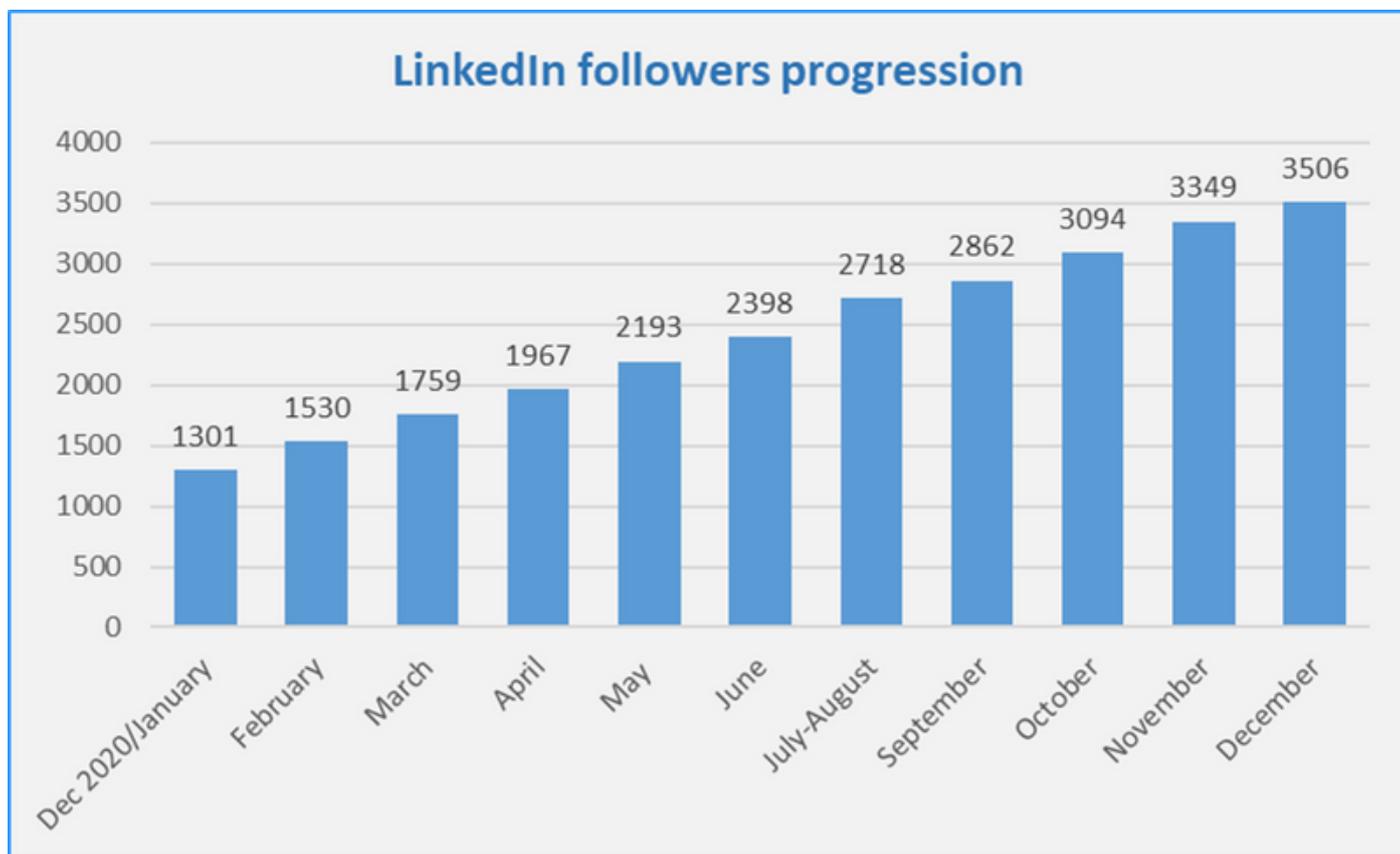
However, a plausible explanation for this increase could be the Platform’s participation in events with an international scope like the World Circular Economy Forum, IUCN for the Biodiversity Congress or the UNFCCC COP26.

The deeper revamping of the website, planned for 2021, has been postponed to early 2022. This is partly due to the global pandemic and the migration to Drupal 8 for all EESC websites. The migration is planned for the first quarter of 2022. This new version would provide more interconnections between pages to increase visibility for some less-visited sections.

SOCIAL MEDIA

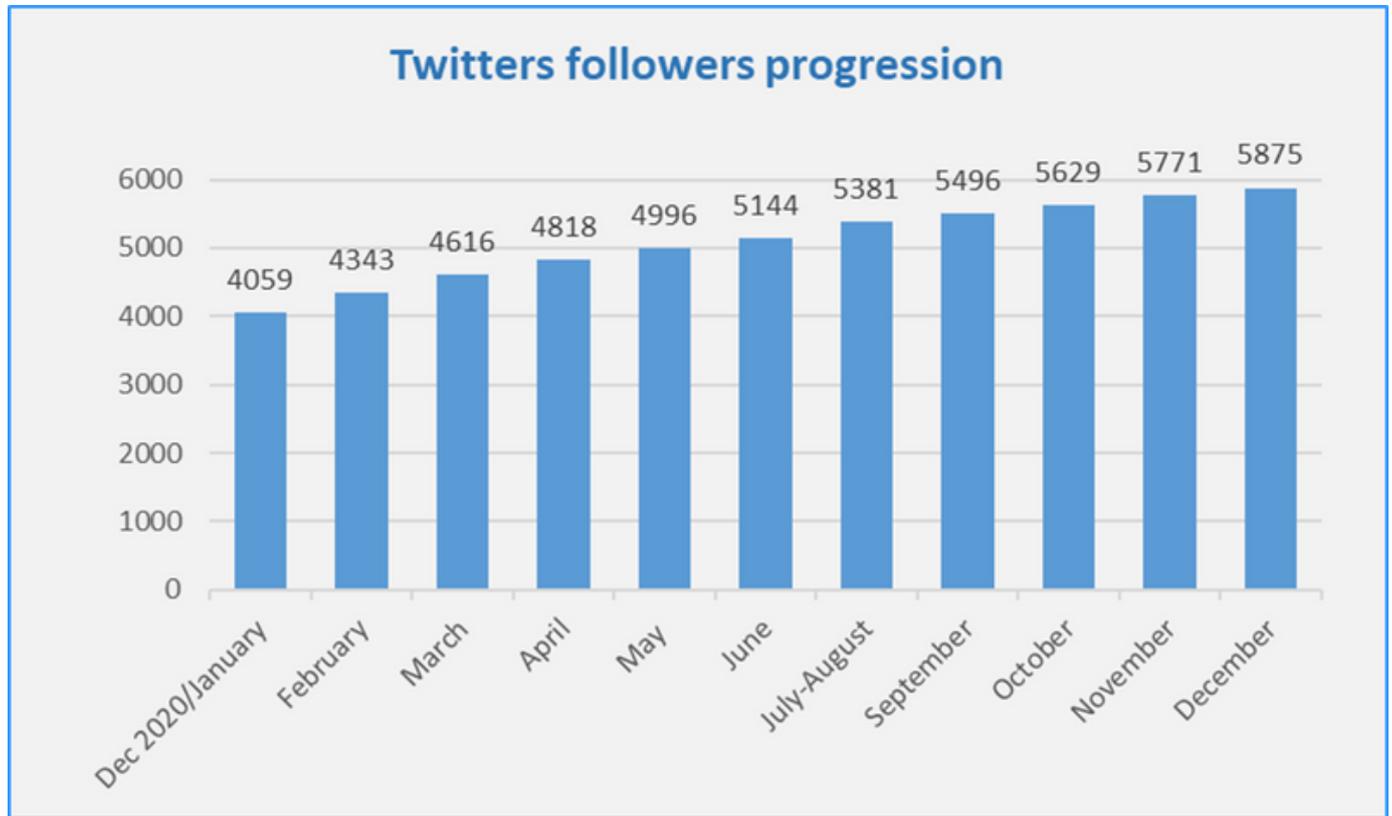
The Platform is present on several social media platforms: Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. ECESP has been on Twitter since 2018, and on LinkedIn and Twitter since 2020.

The YouTube account is used as a depository for all the #EUCircularTalks events.



The Platform's online community grew tremendously in 2021. The biggest progression is for LinkedIn at 270%.

While the account started 2021 with 1300 followers, it had over 3500 followers by the end of the same year.



The increase was also noticeable on Twitter with a progression at 145%, bringing the number of followers close to 6,000 in December 2021. The Platform has 91 subscribers on YouTube.

Although the numbers on YouTube may seem low, they reflect the Platform's growing use of it.

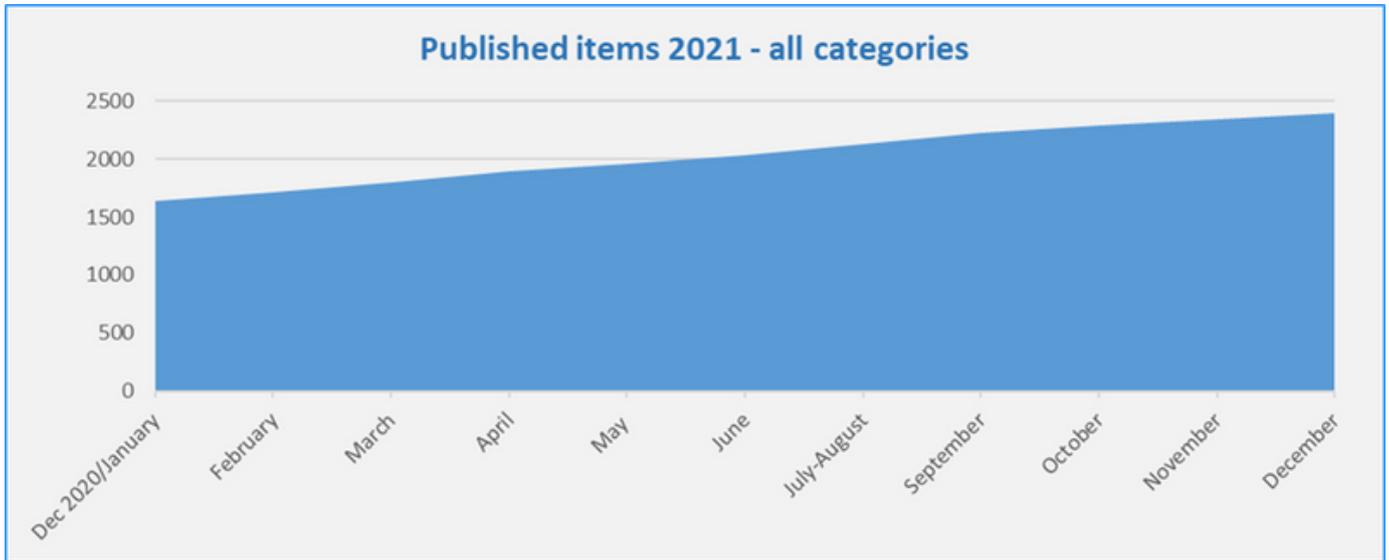
WEBSITE CONTENT

The Platform has a bottom-up approach to the content published on its website. This means that stakeholders provide the content via a submissions process. The content is then edited and published by the Platform's editorial team.

The number of submitted items also soared in 2021 with over 700 more items (good practices, strategies, research documents, platforms and networks, news and events, etc.) compared to 2020. These numbers reflect the circular economy community's interest in the Platform.

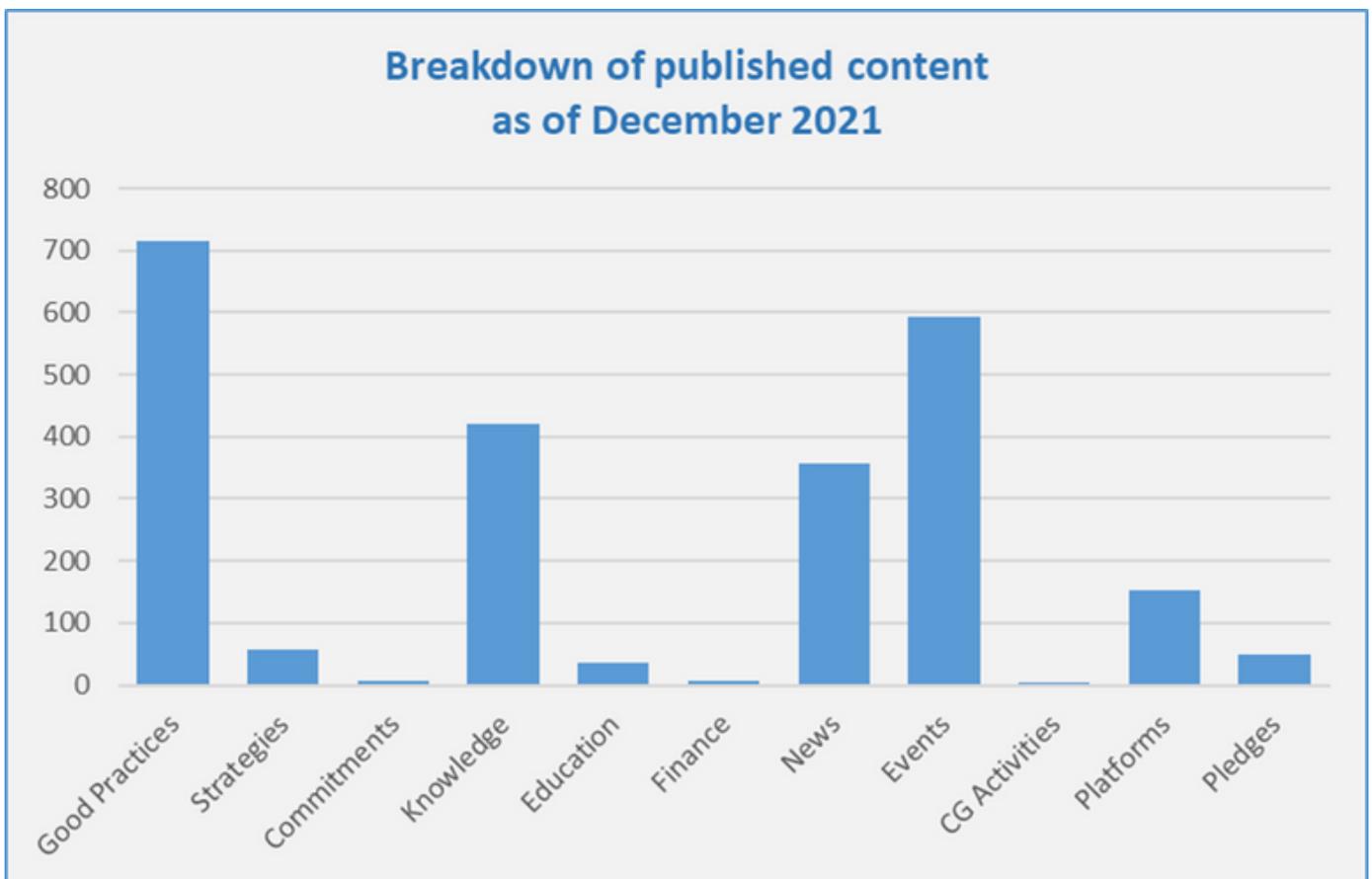
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Good Practices and Events are the items most frequently submitted to the website.

This is consistent with the traffic on the website where, since the launch in 2017, the section on Good Practices and News and events are the most visited pages.



The ECESP website contains a variety of content types – period October 2017 – December 2021:

Type	Description	Total
Good practices	Circular business models, outreach campaigns	714
Knowledge	Reports, papers and studies advancing the circular economy	421
Strategies	Public policies committing to a circular transition	57
Education	Initiatives targeting education and skills for the circular economy	35
Financing	Good practices and initiatives specifically addressing funding and financing aspects	8
Commitments	Private and public voluntary actions with specific targets	7
Pledges (Plastic strategy)	Company and value chain commitments to use recycled plastic	48
News	Updates for the specialised circular economy community	358
Events	Conferences, workshops and (virtual) seminars with a circular dimension	594
CG Activities	Coordination Group activities from the 2018 – 2020 work plan	65

In 2021, the ECESP was updated with a variety of items* – period January to December 2021:

Type	Description	Total
Good practices	Circular business models, outreach campaigns	243
Knowledge	Reports, papers and studies advancing the circular economy	134
Strategies	Public policies committing to a circular transition	11
Education	Initiatives targeting education and skills for the circular economy	35
Financing	Good practices and initiatives specifically addressing funding and financing aspects	8
Commitments	Private and public voluntary actions with specific targets	2
Pledges (Plastic strategy)	Company and value chain commitments to use recycled plastic	0
News	Updates for the specialised circular economy community	96
Events	Conferences, workshops and (virtual) seminars with a circular dimension	179
CG Activities	Coordination Group activities from the 2018 – 2020 work plan	5

*Mid-2021 a new content classification was added to the website in a ‘Toolbox’ section, including Education and Financing and with some of the Knowledge and Good Practices elements being migrated to it. Detailed breakdown will be updated in 2022.

CONCLUSION

In 2021, the Platform's focus was on continuing to support the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan through stakeholder engagement. As we look ahead to the post COVID-19 recovery, the circular economy has the potential to contribute to build back better with increased resilience, job creation and an increased autonomy towards a new structure of the economy, while reducing environmental negative effects substantially, such as fighting climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss.

The transition towards a circular economy requires the commitment and involvement of civil society, businesses, the knowledge community and public authorities. The Platform, through its Coordination Group and stakeholders, will continue delivering on the circular transition and translating policy into action.

ANNEXE I

CONSOLIDATED WORKPLAN

Leadership Groups	CG Leaders	Priorities	Output
Retailers, Consumers, Skills	CSCP	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skills for enabling circular behaviour (sector focus: electronics) 2. Broader outreach (Towards a Circular Academy) 3. Needs/ Opportunities to foster skill building for circular behaviour (Focus: Cities & Retailers) 	<p>CG LeReflection Paper Retailers, Consumers, Skills</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk: Insights on the EU Circular Electronics Initiative & Skills required to make it happen</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk: Circular consumer electronics: getting it right from design to consumption</p> <p>Kick-off Circular Academy: Capacity building programme on circular business models and behaviour change for retailersaders</p>

Cities & Regions	ACR+	Three main priorities: 1. Consider the needs of cities and regions - focus on barriers and types of needs that could be addressed by other stakeholders (in particular linking with climate and CE monitoring) 2. Being inclusive on type of stakeholders - focus on governance models, cooperation and knowledge access facilitation 3. Include territories that are lagging behind - focus on quick wins and longer term structural transformations	Reflection Paper Cities & Regions #EUCircularTalk: Measuring the circular economy impacts in cities and regions
Circular Procurement	OVAM	1. Connecting the dots between the many initiatives that are currently ongoing on circular procurement. 2. Prepare a selection of priority policy recommendations and look at the implementation.	Reflection paper Circular Procurement #EUCircularTalk - Could mandatory circular procurement drive the EU CEAP?

		3. Upscaling, mainstreaming circular procurement	
Food waste, Food systems & Bioeconomy	INNOWO	<p>Three main areas: food, biobased products, agriculture.</p> <p>Three main directions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Food waste and resource efficiency; 2. Governance and system change; 3. Urban food system transformation 	<p>Reflection paper Food Waste, Food systems & Bioeconomy</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Resource efficiency to help combat food waste</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk The role of cities to boost the circularity of food systems</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Governance and system change</p>
Construction & Infrastructure	Holland Circular Hotspot	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Design for Disassembly and Reuse connected with the Renovation Wave 2. Circular Economy in Infrastructure; 3. Construction and Infrastructure value chains & market 	<p>Reflection Paper Construction & Infrastructure (Overview brochure)</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Construction and Infrastructure value chain and market</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Relevance of deconstruction design to enable the renovation wave</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Towards a circular European infrastructure</p>

<p>Textiles</p>	<p>EuRIC, RREUSE, SMEunited</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Functional Policy Framework 2. Circular Design 3. Extended Producer Responsibility in Textiles 	<p>Reflection paper Textiles</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Circular textile design: Get it right from the start!</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Exploring EPR for textiles: Taking responsibility for Europe's textile waste</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk How can EU policy drive circularity in textiles?</p>
<p>Network Governance & CE Hubs</p>	<p>Circular Change icw Holland Circular Hotspot</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The role of CE networks and hubs 2. The potential of network governance for a circular transition (icw Solvenian EU presidency) 	<p>Reflection paper Network Governance & CE Hubs</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Network Governance and circular economy hubs' role in the EU circular transition</p>
<p>Economic Incentives</p>	<p>EuRIC</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes 2. Green Taxation 	<p>Reflection Paper Economic Incentives</p> <p>#EUCircularTalk Green taxation to support the transition towards a climate-neutral and circular economy</p>

(Other) CG initiatives

**Initiatives -
Fostering Debate**

CG Partners

Output

Promoting CE in the EP (in the context of the intergroup on Sustainability, climate change and biodiversity) the role of bioeconomy in the implementation of the EU Circular economy action plan. Series of webinars for MEPs.

Copa-Cogeca, Innowo, IUCN, Interreg Med Green Growth

Circular Week 2021

INNOWO, INEC, CSCP (contribution)

#EUCircularTalk: Scale up circular solutions to reach the 1.5-degree target + Article in the Climate Pact campaign

EMF, Sitra, OVAM, GCE, Climate-KIC

A discussion at the next Coordination Group call if we want to integrate the discussions on the CE - climate nexus into the

		relevant Leadership Groups and/or take a more coordinating role for organising different side events at UNFCCC COP27 in 2022.
#EUCircularTalk: Green digital passport: Product traceability to create circular material loops	EIT Circular Economy Community	
#EUCircularTalk: The circular economy - A transformative approach to tackle biodiversity loss + output document	EMF, INEC, SITRA, IUCN	A follow up conversation at the next Coordination Group call if biodiversity should become a standalone Leadership Group or could be integrated into existing ones.
#EUCircularTalk: Industrial Symbiosis	EIT Climate KIC	
#EUCircularTalk: Youth Voices on Circular Economy	Generation Climate Europe	

<p>#EUCircularTalk Circular business models at the heart of the EU's new CEAP</p>	<p>Sitra</p>	
<p>#EUCircularTalk: Trade, resource extraction and the circular economy</p>	<p>EEB, OVAM</p>	
<p>(Other) CG initiatives</p>		
<p>Initiatives – Ambassadors for the Circular Economy</p>	<p>CG Partners</p>	
<p>The Circular Schools Programme by INEC has an objective to highlight operational solutions of circular economy for schools. This exemplary programme for public procurement covers a wide</p>	<p>INEC, Innowo, GCE</p>	

<p>range of possible actions to be carried out in terms of circular economy on several themes around schools: building, energy, development, the food loop, maintenance, supplies, logistics, awareness-raising and waste management.</p>		
<p>Green deal on Circular Procurement - support public and private buyers in integrating the circular economy and the social & solidarity economy into their purchasing strategies.</p>	<p>INEC, OVAM, Holland Circular Hotspot, ACR+</p>	<p>Programme École Circulaire Publication of a guide 10 steps to integrate the circular economy into your purchasing - Operational guidelines</p>
<p>ECESP on Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE)</p>	<p>Circular Change, Sitra</p>	<p>High-Level Meeting of the Global Alliance on Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency (GACERE)</p>

<p>Frontrunners of the BioCircular Economy 2.0: Nordic-Netherlands Roundtable</p>	<p>Holland Circular Hotspot, Innowo</p>	<p>Frontrunners of the BioCircular Economy 2.0: Nordic-Netherlands Roundtable</p>
<p>(Other) CG initiatives</p>		
<p>Initiatives – Exchanging Good Practices & Knowledge</p>	<p>CG Partners</p>	
<p>"The role of major circular economy networks" event to promote the INEC study</p>	<p>INEC, Holland Circular Hotspot/Circular Change/ OVAM/Sitra/ Rediscovery Centre/ ACR+/Innowo/ Ecopreneur/ Interreg MED Green Growth community</p>	
<p>Circular Futures Austria?</p>	<p>EEB lead with Umwelt Dachverband Austria - ongoing development of Austrian Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform</p>	

(Other) CG initiatives		
Initiatives - Promoting interaction among stakeholders	CG Partners	Output
<p>Strengthening the role of the circular economy in tackling biodiversity loss. Report series? 8 Sept @ IUCN conference (EU Pavilion)</p>	Sitra, IUCN, EMF, INEC	#EUCircularTalk: The circular economy - A transformative approach to tackle key biodiversity loss
<p>ProCirc: project on circular procurement, to exchange and develop trans-nationally: strategies and tools, learning via pilots, form communities with practitioners, policymaking. https://northsearegion.eu/procirc/</p>	OVAM, ACR+	Pending input from OVAM + ACR

There will be:

- **webinars and 8 publications between February 2021 and March 2022**

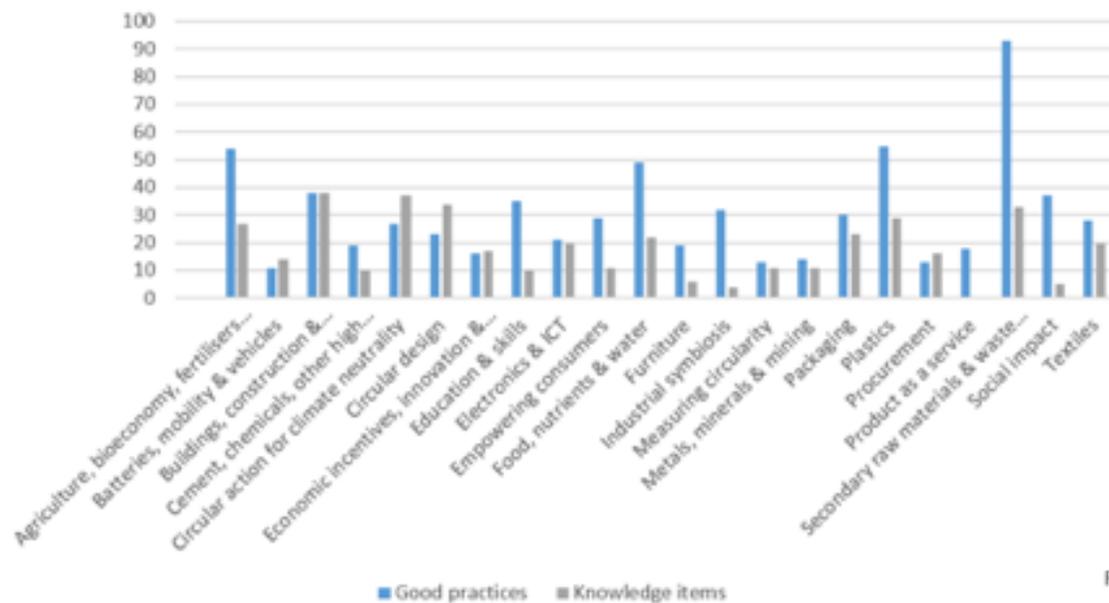
- **a digital circular procurement toolbox is being built. The final product will be published on the ECESP website to make it live on beyond Interreg NSR ProCirc (foreseen Q1/Q2 2022)**

- **a closing event will be held near the end of the project, planning depends on the approval of the call 12 (WP2)**

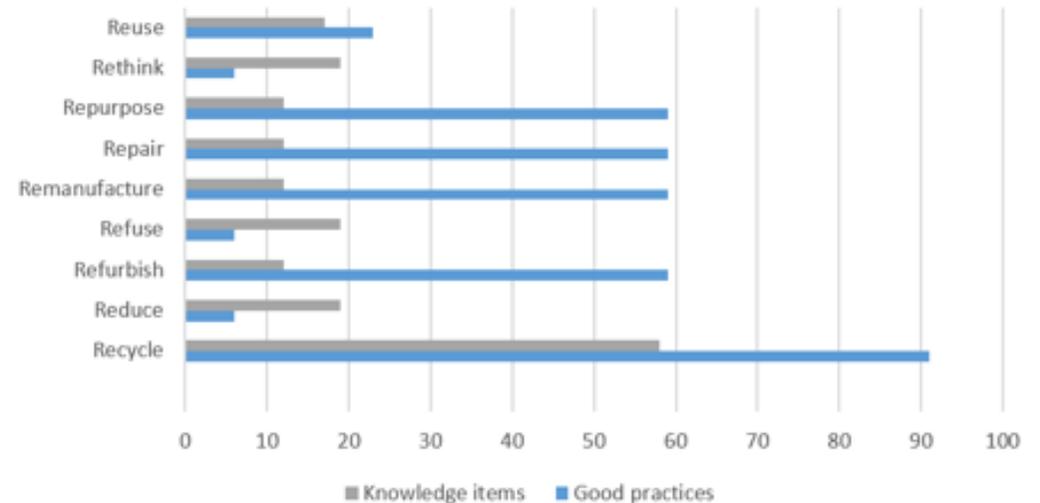
The ECESP Leadership Group on Circular Procurement aligns with the high level policy learning that is a deliverable for ProCirc (ongoing) (WP6)

ANNEXE II WEBSITE ANALYSIS

ECESP online content – Circular Economy Action Plan



ECESP online content – 9Rs



370,154 visits



  Countries

World-Wide 

Visits

283,878 visits (76.7%)

