VLAANDEREN
CIRCULAIR



CIRCULAR FLANDERS

2024: leading the way in Europe

Circular Flanders, active partnerships shaping the circular economy

INTRO

THE NEW NORMAL: A CIRCULAR FUTURE

In 2024, circular policies for the coming governance period were clearly stated: the circular economy must become the new normal. The appointment of Jessika Roswall as EU Commissioner for Circular Economy and Ursula von Der Leyen's ambitious plans for a Circular Economy Act are promising steps in this direction.

However, rolling out the circular transition remains a challenge in the current economic climate, particularly due to the constraints encountered in commercialising circular products and services in a globalised economy. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see that there are already many projects and initiatives taking concrete steps and addressing challenges and bottlenecks through various levers. The driving core value behind all this is the connective bridging role of the platform. The Circular Flanders partnership inspires, brings parties together and is working on a dynamic action plan. Politically and internationally, all eyes are looking in the same direction, ensuring a strong steer towards more circular achievements in 2025.

The business world is ready for it. Are you too?

Paul De Bruycker
Chairman of the Circular Flanders steering group





> The Belgian presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first half of 2024 was a unique opportunity to highlight the circular economy in Flanders.
>
> After all, Circular Economy does not stop at national borders and Flanders can rightly call itself one of the front-runners in Circular Economy in Europe.

Brigitte Mouligneau
Circular Flanders Transition Manager

EUROPEAN PRESIDENCY



From 1 January to 30 June 2024, Belgium presided over the European Council. Flanders also played an important role in this. Because Belgium had put circular economy prominently on its agenda, Circular Flanders also got involved. Along with Transition Manager for Circular Economy Brigitte Mouligneau, we look back on the contribution that Circular Flanders made, as well as the results.

Read the interview here with Brigitte Mouligneau

ALONG WITH

VLAANDEREN CIRCULAIR

CIRCULAR WALLONIA

DEPARTEMENT ECONOMIE WETENSCHAP & INNOVATIE

enterprise europe network

Volksgezondheid Veiligheid van de Voedselketen Leefmilieu

European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform

bruxelles environnement leefmilieu brussel .brussels

Wallonie

WCEF



EUROPEAN PRESIDENCY PERIOD

HIGHLIGHTS FROM EUROPEAN PRESIDENCY 2024

01 Adoption of Flemish resolution to promote the circular economy

The Parliament decided to organise a Circular Economy Conference on 18 March 2024, as part of the Belgian Presidency of the European Council. Twenty-six delegations from various European parliaments, along with those from candidate countries, took part. We presented a picture of Flemish circular activity, supported by representatives from a number of companies (Indaver, Out of Use, Watt4Ever and JUUNOO), who came to present their circular practice cases.
This formed the preparation for a Flemish resolution on the promotion and future of the circular economy in Flanders and Europe. This resolution was adopted on 9 May.



IN ACTION

European Council conclusions

Under the Belgian presidency, council conclusions on circular economy were finalised. These are included in the review of the eighth environmental action programme. They include actions and objectives that span presidency periods. Thus, they embed CE as a strategic choice within the European Commission.

Read more here

EUROPEAN PRESIDENCY PERIOD

02 Successful 'Belgian Accelerator Day' during WCEF

On 17 April 2024, Circular Flanders, along with the Walloon Region, the Brussels Region and the Belgian federal government organised a 'Belgian Accelerator Day' during the World Circular Economy Forum 2024. Among other things, the Flemish CE Monitor scored highly, as did the operation of the Circular Flanders partnership and the development of social circular hubs.

There was great enthusiasm among the 800 visitors. The operation and governance of the Circular Flanders partnership was frequently cited as a best practice. It is quite unique in Europe.

Rewatch the Belgian Accelerator Day here
Watch the promo film featuring Belgian doers here

IN ACTION

Circular Fashion Show
As a surprise act, we came out with a circular fashion show with 26 Belgian designers and 33 different looks made according to circular principles.
Discover all the looks





IN ACTION

Nine insights during Belgian Accelerator Day
During the Belgian Accelerator Day, there was a huge range of interesting sessions on circularity. We have captured the key insights in 9 themes.

- We need a 360° view of raw materials
- Build circular business models and systems
- Keys to circular procurement? Strategy and collaboration
- What works and what doesn't? Together towards a revenue model for repair
- Make reuse the standard
- Smart monitoring will accelerate the circular transition
- Circular hubs are crucial for circular action
- Digital battery passport: view the full life cycle
- Reversible construction with bio-based materials

Read more about the nine insights here

EUROPEAN PRESIDENCY PERIOD

03 Local Green Deals

On 15 March 2024, there was a special EU event for local authorities. During the session 'Local Green Deals: resource efficient, resilient, low-carbon and socially responsible', Transition Manager Brigitte Mouligneau was able to present the operation of the Circular Flanders partnership. She highlighted how the circular economy could contribute towards the climate transition. She did so in front of the 550 local or regional leaders who attended the event.

IN ACTION

Memorandum

Circular Flanders drafted a memorandum after evaluating its operation in 2023. The memorandum contains 10 guidelines for all levels of policy. It contributed towards the Flemish coalition agreement, as well as to the EU guidelines.

View the memorandum





IN ACTION

Circular State of the Union

On 21 March, the Circular Flanders community gathered at Hasselt University for the main Circular Flanders event: the Circular State of the Union! With more than 350 attendees, it was a hugely engaging day filled with interesting speakers. This addressed the government's ambitions and there was a call for sharing bottlenecks. Only by working together can we then resolve them. For each strategic agenda, there was also an explanation as to which actions had been successfully completed, but more importantly, which actions are in the pipeline. Innovators also had the opportunity to share their circular innovations during the walk-in sessions. Many new contacts were made among stakeholders, making the community even stronger.

Read more about the Circular State of the Union

INTRO

ABOUT US

Circular Flanders is a broad partnership with public and private sector players. Within the six strategic agendas, we actively experiment, analyse and take action. The seven levers turn bottlenecks into opportunities wherever possible so that we keep more and more products and materials in circulation. Together we work towards a circular economy in Flanders. More information on the general operation of Circular Flanders can be found at https://vlaanderen-circulair.be/en





THE CIRCULAR FLANDERS PARTNERSHIP

CONTENT

Six Strategic Agendas

Public-private partnerships with their own dynamics, goals, initiators and actions













Seven Levers

Accelerators to overcome barriers and promote best practices



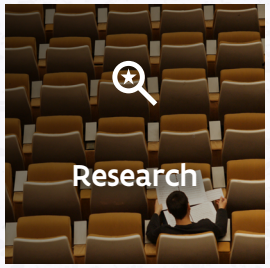














01
STRATEGIC AGENDA
FOOD CHAIN

In a circular food chain, we make sure that everything edible stays that way. We do not let anything go to waste and use waste streams as valuable resources. By using resources more carefully, we guard the limits of our planet. We strive for a resilient food ecosystem in which we care for soil, biodiversity and the well-being of humans and animals. With new innovations and partnerships, within and beyond the food chain, we are making systemic change a reality. This is how we are working towards a circular food chain 2.0.

Hungry for more information on this Strategic Agenda?

INITIATORS

AGENTSCHAP LANDBOUW & ZEEVISSERIJ

Fevia Vlaanderen

FOOD CHAIN

IMPACT PROJECTS FOR 2024

For the food chain SA, 2024 focused on the questioning around obstructive regulations and the approach to circular agriculture was developed in co-creation with stakeholders.

- The Flemish Food Strategy (In Dutch)
- Food loss (In Dutch)
- Green Deal Protein Shift (In Dutch)



IN ACTION

Obstructive legislation

Thus, a great many actions were carried out around obstructive legislation within the food chain. Several topics, such as food sharing, fertiliser legislation, new food and food forests, were further explored by the partnership.

Actions around obstructive legislation



IN ACTION

EIP call

The 2024 call for EIP collaboration projects, an instrument under the Common Agricultural Policy, has already provided four new circular projects

Discover the projects



Our food system is under tremendous pressure. Worldwide, we are facing what the United Nations calls a "triple planetary crisis" – the crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Here in Flanders, the agri-food sector is a major economic driver, and one with enormous potential. Future-proofing this sector is of strategic importance for our entire society. We must therefore work together with a broad group of stakeholders to take steps towards a more circular food system.

Jo Brouns
Flemish Minister for Environment & Agriculture



IN ACTION

Food call projects

During the last quarter, most of the call projects around residual streams and food loss prevention were completed and presented. Meanwhile, the beer draff burger is on the market, we have tasted the chutney made from green tomatoes and the food loss scan can be consulted.
Soon, you will be able to read the results on the doers database.

View the call projects

FOOD CHAIN

01 A physical biomass hub: further research

The research around the economic feasibility of a physical biomass hub was completed and presented at a study day.

View the report here

The demand for bio-based raw materials will only increase in the future and in various sectors; enough reason to have the availability of bio-based raw materials researched for the future. This is in collaboration with the Bio-economy Strategic Agenda. The results will be published in mid-'25.



IN ACTION

STOEMP Deluxe

STOEMP Deluxe processes waste streams into authentic and tasty dishes such as stoemp, pastas, soups and smoothies. They use surpluses from local players, such as farmers and supermarkets, to do so. A perfect example of how good chain operations at the local level can make a difference to people and the environment.

Watch the video



IN ACTION

Antwerp food hub

Many food surpluses can still be processed into high-quality products. The City of Antwerp, which can make a lot of gains here, in part due to the presence of the port, is therefore building up a Social Circular Food Hub. This innovation project could be an important step towards a resilient food chain model on a regional, urban scale.

Read more about the food hub

FOOD CHAIN

02 Strengthening the community within the strategic agenda

The closing event this working year was definitely the community event on 26 November. Captivating keynote speaker Felipe Cozim Melges from Wageningen University brought an insight into the circular food model, and the subsequent sessions received much acclaim and (inter)active participation from the 130 attendees. Sounds like more in 2025!

More information on the sessions



TRAINING

Circular benefits in the food industry

Meanwhile, circular doers from the food industry are also being guided by VLAIO, Flanders' FOOD and Möbius in shaping their circular strategy.

MORE DOERS

Be sure to check out the other vibrant examples from 2024 of how the food chain, in its various facets, is working towards a circular transition.

View all the circular doers





02
STRATEGIC AGENDA
CHEMICALS/PLASTICS

The transition towards a circular economy is a systemic challenge. Collaboration is therefore at the heart of the Chemistry/ Plastics Strategic Agenda, or WACK for short, from its Dutch term. Collaboration to facilitate more recycling, collaboration to explore the use of alternative raw materials, collaboration to weigh in on policy.

The strategic agenda took shape as a rolling action programme. A great many actions started in 2022 or 2023 continued or were completed in 2024. On the other hand, in the second half of 2024, we were also already looking ahead to the years 2025 and 2026 with the core group. Here, we formulated some useful and necessary, as well as feasible, new actions for the following years.

Discover even more food for thought here!

INITIATORS

essenscia

SAMEN MAKEN WE MORGEN MOOIER
OVAM

CHEMICALS/PLASTICS

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Knowledge sharing

Collaboration cannot happen without knowledge sharing. The core group, consisting of OVAM, essenscia, denuo, Catalisti, Agoria, VIL, Centexbel, VITO, Port of Antwerp-Bruges, VLAIO and BBL, met four times in 2024 to steer strategic actions. These meetings were alternately hosted by the partners, who also presented their operations and/or results. The strategic agenda targets a broad audience; the community of stakeholders grew again in 2024.

To share targeted content on chemistry and plastics, the strategic agenda launched a LinkedIn page in 2024. Follow the latest news here.

Chemicals/Plastics Strategic Agenda on LinkedIn



CHEMICALS/PLASTICS

02 Facilitating recycling of plastics

To increase recycling in the sector, collaboration between the different links in the circular value chain is indispensable: from collectors and processors to producers and logistics partners. A better and broader partnership allows for more recovery of 'waste', produces more recyclate, and thus more circular raw materials. Through networking events, we expand our partnership a little bit each time.

Plastic Matters events cover a different topic each time. May's session dealt with regulatory challenges. The October session looked at the future for sustainable plastics from the perspective of circular design.

On 1 February, the strategic agenda, in collaboration with the Green Deal for Sustainable Healthcare, organised a series of round-table discussions with key figures in healthcare on the topic of plastics in healthcare. For those who were there, it was clear: single-use medical devices and packaging are still too often incinerated via non-risk medical waste. Attendees from the healthcare, recycling and plastics sectors appeared particularly willing to take steps towards a different approach. In the meantime, work has begun on an action list that will be shared and reviewed more widely. With the responses obtained, concrete actions will see further work in 2025.

As part of the Community Event for the Strategic Agenda Circular Construction, the Chemistry/Plastics Strategic Agenda organised and facilitated the session 'Plastics take-back initiatives in construction'. After a helpful introduction on the anticipated legislation, eight practical examples were shared. An interactive round-table discussion brought some additional insight into challenges and solutions: from product design and collaboration with demolition contractors to financing, operational processes, scaling up and driving demand for recycled materials. This will also be followed up in 2025!



IN ACTION

RE-ASSIGN project

On 20 November 2024, the launch event for the Interreg VI RE-ASSIGN project, which stands for REcycling plAStics deSIGN, took place. The project, set up with help from VKC-Centexbel, supports companies in the border region between France, Wallonia and Flanders in the transition to a circular economy. It focuses on the development and certification of high-quality recycled plastic products, with a strong focus on quality and industrial applicability.

In addition, the project will develop advanced methods for characterising recycled plastics, addressing important issues such as legacy additives, substances of concern, degradation products and the presence of NIAS (Not Intentionally Added Substances).

All about the RE-ASSIGN project

CHEMICALS/PLASTICS

03 Alternative business models and eco-design

To reduce the carbon impact of plastics, alternative raw materials such as bio-based materials and CO2 as a raw material are being sought. The spearhead cluster for the Flemish chemicals and plastics sector, Catalisti, plays a crucial role in this. As many as 15 new projects were submitted, evaluated and launched in 2024.

Some 200 experts, researchers and industry partners gathered at the Catalisti & Moonshot Day in November 2024. Collaboration to achieve innovative solutions is necessary to accelerate the carbon-free and circular transition. As hosts, Tine Schaerlaekens and Peter Roose showed how Catalisti and Moonshot are facilitating successful connections between universities, start-ups and established companies. This was demonstrated by companies such as Indaver and Effex. They presented their latest technologies and shared some regulatory and funding concerns. In addition, they emphasised Catalisti's crucial role as an accelerator of research and networking.

Watch the Moonshot Day after-movie



IN ACTION

Select4care

This initiative, also supported by the Circular Care Targeted Call by Circular Flanders, is aimed at collecting and recycling hospital plastics.

Select4care

CHEMICALS/PLASTICS

04 Weighing in on policy

In 2024, the year Belgium held the presidency of the Council of the European Union, the (new) (EU) legislation was in the spotlight.

New legislation explained

In the autumn of 2024, work began on drawing up a Flemish Plastic Recycling Roadmap to get some detailed answers to a number of questions. This journey should culminate in the autumn of 2025 with clarity around recycling techniques, space demand, what the targets should be and the supply/quality of recyclate. Along with, linked to this, what policies are needed to achieve these goals. This roadmap will be presented at one of the next community events for the strategic agenda.

> "Through pragmatism and collaboration, we can not only meet the challenges, but also set an example for how a more circular and competitive chemical industry can go hand in hand.

Ivan Pelgrims
CEO of Evonik Antwerp



IN ACTION

Memorandum of Understanding for NordRhein Westfalen.
Flanders and the NordRhein Westfalen region have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to mutually strengthen one another in the circular transition. For the two strong chemical clusters, the challenges in terms of circular economy are similar. Working together around innovation and technological advancements is a win-win situation for both.

03
STRATEGIC AGENDA
WATER CYCLES



The challenges of drought and water scarcity faced by governments, businesses and the water sector, among others, are huge: just think of the impact of climate change, demographic evolutions, spatial planning, socioeconomic evolutions, etc. These impact on all parts of the water cycle and the role of water in our living environment.

The Water Cycles Strategic Agenda aims to increase the use of circular water as a means for **sustainable water use and a robust water system** in Flanders. To do so, it is crucial to match the supply and demand for water in a sustainable way.

Find out what flows in the Water Cycles Strategic Agenda

INITIATORS

VLAAMSE MILIEUMAATSCHAPPIJ

VLAAMSE ONDERNEMERS

WATER CYCLES

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 A living compilation for circular water use

In 2023, the Strategic Agenda created a compilation of challenges in collaboration with various partners. This contains the challenges and some initial solutions for circular water use from ongoing projects and initiatives. The compilation is a living document and was updated in 2024. It is a starting point for constructive dialogue on circular water use and serves as a blueprint for further action.

Circular water usage challenges compilation

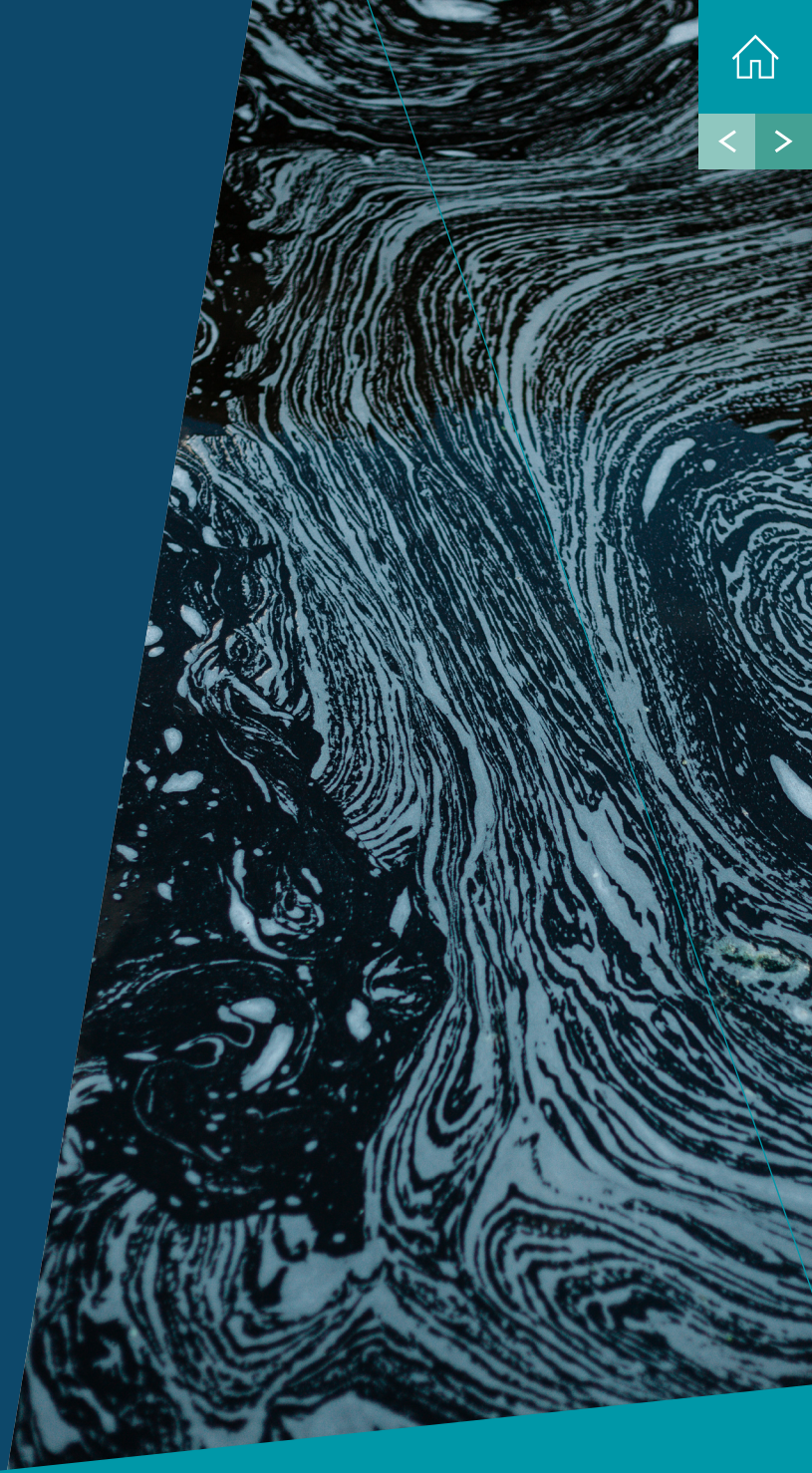
02 Match-making for stormwater

Through the strategic agenda, we are committed to bringing together and inspiring stakeholders on specific water topics. The webinar 'Match-making for agriculture stormwater – industry' attracted many interested parties. An overview of the main bottlenecks and opportunities in the areas of regulation, communication and forms of collaboration was presented.

03 Valorising concentrate streams

In 2024, we continued to work on addressing concentrate streams. More advanced and more efficient treatment technologies allow more water to be reused, but this inevitably produces a concentrate stream. This wastewater stream, where the waste load is more concentrated, presents a number of challenges.

We organised some further exploratory talks in 2024 to establish a research project focusing on fractionation techniques to address chloride and phosphorus in concentrate streams. The project should bridge the gap between the research community and companies. In light of the preparation of a project proposal, a webinar on concentrate flows was organised in October 2024, which attracted a great deal of interest with 250 registrations.



04 Across the strategic agendas

High-quality water conservation and closing cycles is addressed in various collaborations, in consultation and agreement with the SA. In other words, several initiatives are working towards a robust water system for the future.

- Circular Water Platform
- Project-level water atlas
- Water barometer for businesses



IN ACTION

Green Deal Brewers

In the Green Deal Brewers, 16 breweries and 5 partners have been working together since 2018 to make water usage in the brewing sector more sustainable. Thanks to a learning network and various actions at the companies, such as optimisation of cleaning and water reuse, they were able to excel at the final event in 2024 with combined water savings of 2.3 million m³, or 915 Olympic swimming pools.

Relive the final event



IN ACTION

Water-conscious Construction in Flanders.

'Drought Living Labs' aims to raise the threshold for research into new technologies, other solution options and partnerships.

Find out all about water-conscious construction



04
STRATEGIC AGENDA
BIO-ECONOMY

The bio-economy works with all available organic streams from agriculture, landscape management and specific productions, and uses them as raw materials for a new sustainable industry. This results in bio-based building materials, nutrients, specialty chemicals or soil improvers. All of these are alternatives to fossil materials and also store carbon. This Strategic Agenda builds a strategic basis for realising the potential of the Flemish bio-economy, as an essential part of:

- a resilient, stronger local economy
- greater independence from raw material imports
- the transition to a carbon-neutral economy

Accordingly, the Bio-economy Strategic Agenda actively seeks opportunities to use bio-based materials or biomass in the broader economy.

Read all about what is growing within this Strategic Agenda here

INITIATORS

DEPARTEMENT ECONOMIE WETENSCHAP & INNOVATIE

NEW from 2025

ILVO
Instituut voor Landbouw-, Visserij- en Voedingsonderzoek



BIO-ECONOMY

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Bio-based building

How can we promote bio-based materials in the construction industry and form new chains? Along with various stakeholders, we are committed to creating a Flemish centre for bio-based construction materials.

The pioneers Kamp C, Province of East Flanders, POM Limburg, Rurant and Embuild created 3 working groups together with the Strategic Agenda:

- Policy advice
- Quality and value
- Chain formation and valorisation

In late 2024, we met for the 3rd time and the working groups prepared an action plan for the next six months.

IN ACTION

Earth Plant Fiber

Along with a consortium of bio-material chain players, we helped get the non-profit organisation from Earth Plant Fiber off the ground. We also coordinate with organisations that promote supply chain integration, such as B2BE Facilitator and the Living Lab Hemp+.

BIO-ECONOMY

02 Bio-refinery hubs



IN ACTION

B2BE Facilitator

Too often, residual and by-product streams from agriculture and horticulture still remain unused. This is a missed opportunity, because this biomass usually contains interesting components that the processing industry can put to good use in bio-based, sustainable products. To fill in the missing link, the B2BE Facilitator aims to connect all the ecosystem stakeholders.

Read more here



IN ACTION

Bio-refinery hubs

Bio-streams are usually small and locally available raw materials which, as a result, may inhibit their valorisation. Thus, the project 'locally processed: from biomass to biomass hub' was born, and the focus is first on peat-free potting soil. In fact, a great deal of work is still carried out with (fossil) peat today. A local bio-refinery hub could be an option for this and offer alternatives.

Watch the video

03 Carbon storage



IN ACTION

Carbon storage

Storing carbon in the soil is a way to combat climate change and also enriches the soil as a basic element for all life.
The Strategic Agenda helps in working to draw up a policy framework to achieve a certification of carbon in soils as soon as possible. It builds upon the work of the Carbon Counts project.

04 Communication

There is some confusion about the term bio-economy. An initial important step is therefore a clear definition.
The working agenda formulated it this way:

> All economic activities that use biological organisms or processes fall under the definition of bio-economy and are taken up by the Strategic Agenda.
> Except for the part intended for the food chain, which is included separately by the respective Strategic Agenda.

05 EVENTS



IN ACTION

Forum & Flemish Bio-economy Policy Event

The second forum of the Strategic Agenda met on 14 November 2024. The progress of the various initiatives was explained in detail; further actions and challenges for the bio-economy Strategic Agenda in Flanders were brainstormed.

More information



IN ACTION

Study day

On 20 November 2024, the Minaraad ('Flanders Environmental and Nature Council') organised a study day on 'the future of the bio-economy in Flanders'.
Through a systemic lens, we looked at the challenges for policy around bio-economy in Flanders.

More information on the presentations



IN ACTION

Bio-based city

On 25 April, a bio-economy market was organised in Werfheide Mechelen, also as part of the European 'citisystem' project. It is no coincidence that the city of Mechelen is one of the active partners in this project; in fact, the city wants to facilitate its own local partnership for high-quality processing and valorisation of bio-resources.

More about Citisystem

BIO-ECONOMY

06 European bio-economy strategy

Input was provided through the ECESP Leadership Group for Bio-economy for a joint position paper for the review of the European Bio-economy Strategy.

More information about ECESP

07 Future availability of bio-resources

With the increasing need for bio-resources for the various sectors, a study became urgent. The study will allow a picture to be formed of the need for, and availability of, bio-resources in 2030 and 2050 in Flanders. For this purpose, future scenarios will be worked with, where various parameters will vary. For example, it looks at the impact of rising geopolitical tensions and the rise of circular, energy and protein transitions. Furthermore, precondition aspects, facilitating and stimulating policies and adaptive measures by industry are also taken into account.

The research will use available data from, among others, the Flemish bio-economy monitor, interviews with experts and workshops for drawing up and validating the various scenarios. The assignment will conclude with a public study day in 2025, on which the results will be announced.





05 STRATEGIC AGENDA MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

The Manufacturing Industry Strategic Agenda focuses on three key sectors and materials: electronics and machinery, professional and consumer textiles, and wood and furniture. With the ambitious goal of engaging 50% of manufacturing companies in circular thinking and working by 2030, the Strategic Agenda is aimed at structural change within industry. To achieve this goal, in 2024 we focused on six work paths with specific objectives. We fleshed this out with some concrete actions, including several working tables where relevant Living Labs for each value chain had a discourse with one another and tackling bottlenecks was discussed. This integrated approach underscores the commitment to accelerating circular transition in the manufacturing industry.

Take a closer look at all components of the Manufacturing Industry Strategic Agenda here

INITIATORS

.AGORIA

VLAIO

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Circular business models (work path 1) and circular procurement (work path 4)

The Strategic Agenda aims to encourage circular business models and new forms of collaboration in the chain. The Innovative Business Models Working Table brought together stakeholders from the value chains of electronics & machinery, textiles, and wood & furniture. Some good practices were shared during two thematic sessions. The lessons learned and challenges from the Living Labs were central to this. One example that came up was Out-of-Use. This initiative focuses on reuse and recycling of (office) equipment with additional services, such as data destruction. Stan Dewaele (Out-of-Use) emphasised: "If you find the right customer to take care of, a valid business model can always be set up." In addition, structuring and encouraging circular procurement was high on the agenda. In collaboration with Circular Procurement Lever



IN ACTION

Matchmaking event Buyer Meets Supplier for textiles and workwear

On 11 June, we organised the matchmaking event where 20 textile providers and 90 participants came together to exchange experiences and make new connections. This event also presented some tools and guidelines for developing circular products and drawing up specifications. One example of this is Dr. Green, Utexbel's circular programme, which focuses on an integrated approach from fibre to fabric and some innovative initiatives around recycling. An update was also presented to the Procurement Roadmap, a practical guide to purchasing circular textiles, covering raw materials, production, care, ready-to-wear clothing and procurement.

Read more about the matchmaking event

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

02 Highlighting added value of repairing and refurbishing (work path 2)

Repairing and refurbishing is essential for extending product life. One example of this is the Textile Repair Hub, a manufacturing centre where sustainable, social and local clothing is retouched. This is where issues of quality, pace, willingness to pay and influx are addressed. In addition, Living Lab Repair First is working on systemic challenges, such as a shortage of electro-repairers and pressure on the business model for electro-repair. Through a collaboration with Syntra, Vanden Borre and Kringwinkel, some training programmes have been established. Charlotte Vanhoutte, project coordinator, states: "Training in smaller modules, with shorter lesson times and hands-on on the shop floor works best."

More on recovery at the Living Lab Repair First



IN ACTION

Embracing Circular Manufacturing

At the WCEF, the Strategic Agenda facilitated the session Embracing Circular Manufacturing: Adopting Repair Solutions. Here, some inspiring examples were presented, such as the Austrian 'Repair Bonus', the VITO tool 'Circufix' and 'aSmartWorld'. The session convinced the numerous attendees of the impact and potential of repair solutions in the manufacturing industry.

Discover Circufix

03 Leveraging the added value of the social economy as a whole (work path 5)

Circular economy sometimes requires some labour-intensive processes – for example, in the reuse of materials. To overcome this obstacle, collaboration between regular companies and social enterprises offers great potential. By working together, they strengthen one another and achieve a sustainable ecological and social impact.



IN ACTION

Elektro Reuse Forum
Recupel's Elektro Reuse Forum event on 17 December highlighted the importance of collaboration between social and circular initiatives, such as the repair of Miele appliances by Kringwinkel VITES, among other things.

Watch the video here



IN ACTION

MolwolOne inspiring example is Molwol, where sheep's wool from the non-profit organisation KEMP – a nomadic, sustainable farming company – is processed into circular products such as pillows and quilts. For production, it collaborates with the non-profit organisation Lidwina, which employs people distanced from the labour market. This project shows how social and circular goals can go hand in hand.

'Read more about Molwol

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

04 Focusing on tailored jobs and skills aimed at the circular transition (work path 3)

In 2024, the Manufacturing Industry Strategic Agenda also focused on leveraging the Jobs and Skills Lever to accelerate the circular transition, with the social economy playing an important role. At the 25 June working table, manufacturing industry stakeholders came together to share best practices and discuss challenges. An inspirational example of quality and reuse came from The Woody Group, where sustainability is embedded in their business operations. As Nelle Matthys (The Woody Group) put it: "Choose your circles."



IN ACTION

Textile repair competencies

Among other things, the findings from the Life Extension Circular Textile Lab project from CiLab and Decathlon were presented. This project supports Decathlon in training employees to repair clothing, tents and other products.

Watch Cilab's video on repair skills



06 STRATEGIC AGENDA CIRCULAR CONSTRUCTION

The Strategic Agenda for Circular Construction, through 10 ambitious work paths, is focused upon making efficient use of the existing portfolio of buildings, infrastructure and all the materials they contain. By carefully inventorying and managing everything, its life is extended. This way, the Flemish built environment turns into a true 'urban mine'. New buildings are designed in a forward-looking way, based on sustainable and circular principles.

Read all about the site leadership of the Circular Construction Strategic Agenda

The construction industry in figures

- 50% of all raw materials worldwide are used in the construction industry
- Some 33% of waste and material streams released in Europe come from construction
- 36% of our carbon footprint is determined by the way we build and live, and 40% by our energy consumption

INITIATORS

SAMEN MAKEN WE MORGEN MOOIER OVAM

Embuild VLAANDEREN

CIRCULAR CONSTRUCTION

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

One step closer in the transition to circular construction

In 2024, we made some significant strides in the transition to circular construction through knowledge sharing & networking, extensive training, research that was translated into practice, projects in the field and international collaboration. The involvement and collaboration of various stakeholders helped to further achieve our circular ambitions in the construction sector.

01 The Strategic Agenda is going international

Collaboration with neighbouring countries is beneficial in the context of circular construction because it promotes the exchange of knowledge, technologies and best practices. As a member of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform, Circular Flanders organised a circular talk in 2024 on affordable and circular construction.

Re-watch this webinar

Circular Flanders and the Dutch Cirkelstad signed a Joint Declaration of Intent on 29 May to promote bilateral collaboration around the transition to a circular construction economy.

Last year, the Flemish Prime Minister signed a collaboration agreement with the Circular Valley Foundation – the German counterpart of Circular Flanders – for companies, start-ups, scientists and policy-makers to work together to develop solutions to accelerate the transition to a circular economy. This year, this collaboration became concrete and at the Community Event for the Strategic Agenda, the search was launched for German companies eager to collaborate with Flemish construction companies and vice versa.



02 KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND NETWORKING

In 2024, two Community Events were organised, in February and December, at each of which we brought together up to 200 players from the construction ecosystem to inspire one another and establish collaborations.

In addition, there were quite a few successful meetings linked to one of the work paths for the Strategic Agenda. These included the Urban Mining event organised by the Circular Demolition Teams Living Lab and VSOR, the Construction Work Passport Stakeholder Event organised by OVAM, the study day for sustainable carpentry connections organised by Embuild, and the Transition Forum 'Environment for the Future' organised by the Department of Environment.

There is also an active online community around circular construction in Flanders, with a quarterly newsletter and the LinkedIn group Circulair Bouwen ('Circular Construction').

- To the LinkedIn group
- Subscribe to the newsletter



IN ACTION

Community events

OVAM, Embuild Flanders and Circular Flanders chose to open the community events to everyone, not just those who were already active in the Green Deal for Circular Construction. As a result, the community is continuing to grow tremendously, with lots of new faces and lots of new insights every time.

- 1st Community event
- 2nd Community event



IN ACTION

Perception survey

A perception survey around circular construction conducted on behalf of OVAM in 2024 shows the importance of knowledge sharing and networking in the transition to a circular construction culture. As part of the circular construction Strategic Agenda, we therefore place a lot of emphasis on this.

- Perception survey results



CIRCULAR CONSTRUCTION

03 TRAINING:

The training offerings, which expanded once more in 2024, are evidence that we are on the right track in the transition to circular construction. On the one hand, we are seeing greater attention to circularity in mainstream training.
Examples include the postgraduate course 'Circular construction: from materials to construction project' at Ghent University and the Build Environment course at Howest.

On the other hand, there are some more specific training courses on circular construction, both for students and professionals. Some great examples are the learning networks 'Circular demolition' (organised by Tracimat), 'Bio-based construction materials' (organised by Embuild) and an advanced TOTEM training course by OVAM.

Specifically on procurement for construction projects, the Circular Procurement Lever has set up some workshops that can still be requested by a group of companies or local authorities in 2025. Meanwhile, an online course on circular procurement is also on the learning hub.

View the learning hub

04 RESEARCH:

Here is a sampling of the many studies that helped address several challenges that circular constructors still face this year.

The reuse of demolition materials raises some legal issues relating to liability, where the Policy Lever has sought some solutions. A memo prepared by Hasselt University at the request of Circular Flanders summarises the main findings regarding the responsibility for the quality of reused material and the need for permits in the event of intermediate storage.

View the memo

At present, there is still (too) much uncertainty about the insurability of circular buildings or circular construction projects. A study by Seco and Common Ground commissioned by Circular Flanders offers answers to questions such as 'What is already insurable?', 'What circular practices may give rise to increased risk?', and 'How to demonstrate that the risk is normal?'.

View the research

The VISUM project, conducted by Buildwise on behalf of OVAM, resulted in the new website bouwensloopafval.be, with an overview of recycling routes and disposal channels for non-stony construction and demolition waste.

View the website

Product-as-a-service models contribute to circular construction by keeping suppliers responsible for maintaining, taking back and reusing or recycling products at the end of their life cycle. A study by the Center offers an insight into how to integrate this circular business model into the procurement of (refurbishment) construction projects and includes some model clauses for PaaS contracts.

View the model clauses

Construction passports are essential for circular construction because they capture detailed information about the materials in a building, facilitating reuse and recycling. A Proof of Concept for the construction passport was developed on behalf of OVAM. This is a mock-up for a data platform where data can be entered or uploaded. The Department for the Environment released a handbook on 'Climate-proof construction and development' with some hands-on information on how municipalities can put this into practice with existing policy instruments, one of the five basic principles being the use of circular materials and the sustainable use of waste.

View the outreach

Circular Flanders and VVSG developed a brochure for local authorities to engage in circularity in their built environment.

View the brochure

A study of interfering substances by VITO and Tracimat commissioned by OVAM focused on non-hazardous substances that hinder high-quality recycling of debris. The study's conclusions led to a modification of the standard procedure for traceability of demolition materials.

Commissioned by OVAM, KU Leuven conducted a study on an environmental benchmark that allows designers to compare their building designs with reference values.

View the study

05 PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES

On-site projects are crucial in the transition to a circular construction economy. More than 192 circular doers in the construction industry can already be found in the doer database.

To the doer database

Several pilot projects on plastics take-back in the construction industry have been launched in recent years, ranging from site trimmings to material coming from demolition sites, or paint or glue packaging.

The interactive round-table brought some insight into challenges and solutions: from product design to collaboration with demolition contractors, from operational processes to driving demand for recycled materials. The initiative was a great example of how different Strategic Agendas can reinforce one another. A sequel is definitely in the offing!

IN ACTION

Circular demolition teams

Building demolition often proceeds in several phases that are independent of one another. The client, architect, contractor and other parties are mainly concerned with their own part in the works and there is not enough driving force to engage in high-quality recycling and reuse. At the Circular Demolition Teams Living Lab, a more conscious and integrated approach to demolition projects is being researched and tested.

Watch the video





IN ACTION

Living Lab BRUG

The database maakdebrug ('make the bridge'), developed as part of the Living Lab BRUG, contains construction projects that can be tracked through a timeline, on which various items, such as final decisions, options considered, ancillary information and consultation sessions, are posted. In addition, one can see what the circular ambitions were and what tools were used to achieve them.

Make the bridge



IN ACTION

Circular Value Index

The MASCO Living Lab has developed a Circular Value Index, a methodology to evaluate the viability of circular business models and optimise the design of (construction) products to better fit the circular economy. The formula for circular value is residual value, divided by cost of reuse (such as transport and storage), multiplied by risk.

Circular Value Index

01
LEVER
INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Innovation and entrepreneurship are key drivers of social change. The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Lever focuses on accelerating the transition to a circular economy. Initiator VLAIO (the Flemish Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship) has a broad network and tools to stimulate the circular transition. VLAIO's financial support, knowledge and network are therefore gratefully used within this Lever.

Discover how this Lever stimulates innovation

INITIATORS

VLAIO

INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

VLAIO

Through the circular economy calls, VLAIO is aiming to support partnerships to develop, test, implement and scale up circular system solutions and business models. Projects must contribute to Flanders' ambition to move towards a circular economy. The ambition is to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and reduce our materials footprint by 30%.

01 Seven new Living Labs

Circular Economy Living Labs aim to achieve breakthroughs at the level of value chains and ecosystems through intense collaboration between as many parties as possible. This requires a systemic approach and change with far-reaching impact at the organisational, socio-cultural and technological levels. The projects focus on maintenance, repair, reuse, remanufacturing, sharing, repurposing and modifications in design, materials and logistics.
Each project has a broad partnership of companies, knowledge institutions, authorities, NPOs, funders and sectoral federations. The Living Labs involve intensive collaboration on circular challenges. The resulting solutions, experiences and knowledge will be widely shared to facilitate the circular shift.

Discover all projects here (In Dutch)



IN ACTION

31 circular chain collaboration projects

VLAIO launched a call for 'circular chain collaboration' in early 2024. The project call aims to support Flemish SMEs that want to incorporate circular principles into their business model. The partnership must consist of at least two SMEs and can be further expanded to include companies, knowledge institutions, sectoral federations, non-profit organisations, etc.

Projects within this call will design and implement circular products, processes or services with the partnership. Knowledge and experience gained should be widely shared.

Discover the projects here

02 Tools

Several tools for circular business strategies were developed or expanded.



CIRCU-RADAR

An introductory tool for entrepreneurs to quickly familiarise themselves with the basics of the circular economy and gain inspiration to get started with it themselves.

Download the tool here (In Dutch)



CIRCU-WIJZER

Answer the questions of the Circu-Wijzer and find out what practical and concrete steps you and your company can take in the circular economy. Based on your answers, you will be sent a clear report with information and inspiration. Completely tailored to your company, sector and personal ambitions.

Answer the questions here (In Dutch)



CIRCU-PLAN

Get free guidance from VLAIO's circular economy business consultants, resulting in a concrete roadmap for integrating circularity into your business.

More information (In Dutch)

STARTER GUIDE

A toolkit for start-up entrepreneurs with exercises, tips, templates and contacts to strengthen their network, clarify ideas and create a financial business plan. Created by business experts and coaches, with a comprehensive update on circular economy and sustainability.

Startersgids.vlaio.be (In Dutch)



INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

CIRCULAR FLANDERS CALLS

03 Targeted Call Design4Circularity

The call for Circular Flanders' 2024 grant call 'Design4Circularity' was launched in early June.

We put the focus on the design process. About 80% of the environmental impact of products is determined by design. Consequently, eco-design is a key to success in the transition to a sustainable and circular economy.

Eighty-nine projects were submitted, from which the jury selected 20 projects within the € 2m budget.

The projects started in late December. An enthusiastic group of project applicants with partners followed the launch meeting and first networking session online.

Discover the projects approved

04 Results of previous calls

Circular Healthcare Targeted Call projects are running at full speed.

View them here

The projects from the 2022 call 'prevention of food loss and valorisation of residual streams' presented their results last year.

View them here

To conduct an evaluation of the grant calls as support for scaling up the circular economy, a contract was awarded for a new impact analysis of the targeted calls. The financing of 'circular works' was also scrutinised. Completion in early 2025.

05 Support for external calls

Circular Flanders is systematically involved in defining and judging calls on circular economy, the ones from VLAIO, but also the VBO Circular Business Award, the special awards of the Henry Van de Velde Awards, the eco-design award by OVAM, and the eco-design student award, as well as the project calls initiated by the King Baudouin Foundation or the ING fund.



IN ACTION

Circular Flanders-VLAIO collaboration

Circular Economy is one of the 7 transition priorities – and not one of the least! For business support, Circular Flanders is working closely with VLAIO. In VLAIO's business pathways team, 7 employees provide support to companies and organisations with practical questions about circular economy.

Circular Flanders co-promotes tools such as Circu-Radar, Circu-Wijzer and Circu-plan, as well as the business pathways team. At the bi-monthly consultation meetings, we coordinate on the various activities regarding the scaling up of the circular economy.

Discover the business pathways team here

06 Green Deal for Renting and Sharing

The year 2024 was a dynamic and successful one for the Green Deal for Renting and Sharing. With more than 100 active participants – businesses, organisations and local authorities – the sharing economy was further enhanced. In 2024, the Green Deal not only shared knowledge through substantive webinars and expert sessions, but also hosted some key events, such as the Sharing Summit.

All about Renting and Sharing



IN ACTION

Sharing Summit 2024

On 28 November, the Sharing Summit 2024 took place at the Winter Circus in Ghent, bringing together more than 150 professionals. The summit focused on circular business models, retail, design and community-building in enhancing sustainable initiatives in the sharing economy.

All the information about the Sharing Summit



IN ACTION

Information sheet for local authorities

Along with the VVSG (Flemish Association of Cities and Municipalities), the Green Deal developed an Information Sheet for Local Authorities. This sheet provides local authorities with some valuable insights on how to align their policies with circular goals and support rental and sharing initiatives. Local authorities play a crucial role in promoting the sharing economy at the local level, and this information sheet helps them make informed decisions to encourage sustainable initiatives.

Information sheet for local authorities

WEBINARS AND EXPERT SESSIONS

The Green Deal for Renting and Sharing organised several webinars and expert sessions in 2024 to promote knowledge and collaboration within the network.

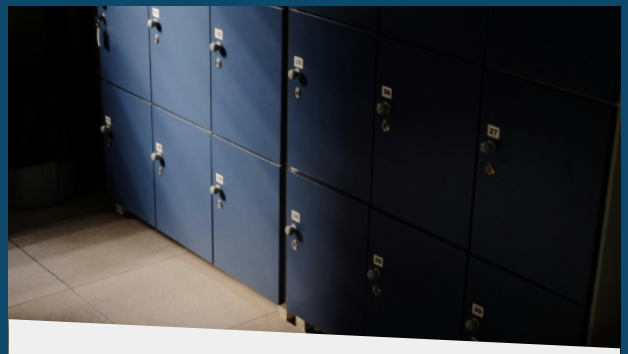
IN ACTION

Webinar: Insurance for the sharing economy

This webinar discussed the insurance issues facing rental and sharing platforms, and how they can guard against any potential risks. This is crucial for the development of reliable and sustainable sharing economy initiatives.

Read more





IN ACTION

Smart lockers and sharing models

The Green Deal organised a workshop discussing what smart lockers mean for businesses' rental and sharing models. This technology offers innovative solutions for businesses that want to experiment with new forms of product distribution and return.

Read more



IN ACTION

Attracting customers for rental and sharing offerings

In this session, Britt Buseyne from WijDelen gave some concrete strategies for successfully attracting customers for rental and sharing offerings. The key points for helping companies build up a solid customer base were shared.

Read more



IN ACTION

Knowledge institutions and the sharing economy

What can Flemish knowledge institutions teach us about promoting rental and sharing initiatives? This session highlighted some valuable insights from academic institutions and their impact on the development of the sharing economy.

Read more



02 LEVER CIRCULAR PROCUREMENT

In a circular economy, not only is the supply of innovative, circular products and services important, but also the demand for them. Purchasers play a crucial role here: by integrating circular principles into contracts and procurements, they encourage the transition towards a more sustainable economic model. Both companies and authorities are contributing to the growth of the circular economy in this way.

In 2024, we again translated the needs of various partners into concrete procurement projects that support this growth. In this regard, circular procurement is a powerful lever for further developing sustainable products and services. Through this vision, we are collaborating closely with various Strategic Agendas. This approach is in line with the Flemish government's sustainable procurement policy and builds upon the valuable lessons from the Green Deal for Circular Procurement (2017-2019), the Interreg North Sea Region ProCirc project (2019-2023) and the Interreg North Sea CEO project (2023-2026).

Find out how this Lever encourages circular procurement

INITIATORS

HET FACILITAIR BEDRIJF

VLAANDEREN CIRCULAIR

CIRCULAR PROCUREMENT

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Intra-Belgian platform

Implementing circular procurement practices within the strict frameworks of public procurement legislation brings some additional hurdles with it, but at the same time creates some new opportunities.

It is precisely on these challenges that the intra-Belgian platform is focusing. For example, a comparative study on mandatory sustainability criteria within public procurement was conducted externally in 2024. In doing so, the platform has the possibility of submitting dossiers requiring political validation to the Interministerial Conference on the Environment, extended to economics. A working group is currently looking at how we can bring more sustainability and circularity to public procurement and what changes in legislation might contribute to this.

View the publication here

02 SPP criteria tool

With the launch of the SPP criteria tool from DOMG, purchasers can more easily incorporate circular and social criteria into their public contracts. Purchasers can make use of these criteria at the various stages of a public contract. The website circularprocurement.be offers purchasers valuable knowledge and practical tools, including sample specifications and guidelines for circular materials. Links to the SPP criteria tool are integrated into this.

Use the SPP criteria tool



IN ACTION

Communication and workshop methodology

A communication plan was drawn up and a new workshop methodology was developed, which were organised by Studio D at various organisations in 2024 and will be further rolled out in 2025. The focus of the workshop is on both public and private purchasers. The communication campaign, launched in the autumn of 2024, will also continue through 2025. Would you also like to co-organise a session for your target audience of purchasers?

Watch the video here

More information on the workshops

CIRCULAR PROCUREMENT

03 NS Circular Economy Office (CEO)

The CEO project is in full swing and its main goal is to scale up circular strategies and make circular office practices mainstream. This project, which runs from 2023 to 2026, focuses on circular office interiors and aims to scale up circular products and business models.

In collaboration with the
Manufacturing Industry Strategic Agenda



IN ACTION

Sample furniture
The non-profit organisation ONBETAALBAAR created a sample piece of furniture, 'Y NOT', from a range of sustainable materials and with various functions to show the multitude of possibilities.

Watch the video here



IN ACTION

Stakeholder event
On 27 February, along with the Flemish partners, we organised a stakeholder event on circular office furniture, where several companies shared their experiences and some interactive sessions provided input for the CEO project.

More about this

On 18 and 19 June 2024, the 13 project partners for the CEO project met in Hamburg for an inspirational exchange. Experts and representatives from Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France attended. The focus was on circular procurement and mobilising the European office furniture sector.

Watch the video here

During the Circular State of the Union, the project was highlighted in an interactive walk-in session on circular office furniture for the entire Flemish community.

CIRCULAR PROCUREMENT

04 Leadership Group on Circular Procurement (ECESP).

An important partner in our mission is the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP), with Circular Flanders playing a central role in the Leadership Group on Circular Procurement, among other things. In addition, the LinkedIn group Circular Procurement Learning Network provides a platform where purchasers and circular providers can share and exchange some inspirational examples and useful information.

Join the LinkedIn group

More information about ECESP



INFO

Webinar: digitalisation for circular procurement

On 27 September, we explored how digitalisation can improve circular procurement practices with members of ECESP's Circular Procurement Leadership Group during an #EUCircularTalk. This focused on optimising purchasing processes through circularity criteria, ethical considerations and integrating advanced technologies such as AI for greater sustainability.

More information

CIRCULAR PROCUREMENT

05 Green Deal for Sustainable Healthcare

The first umbrella event in the Green Deal for Sustainable Care took place on 8 May, which included some round-table discussions on sustainable purchasing in healthcare. Circular Flanders, AZ Delta, UZ Ghent and Zorgpunt Waasland provided a session on tips and testimonials within this field.

In partnership with
Chemicals/Plastics Strategic Agenda

On 17 September, the new learning network 'Circular Procurement within the Green Deal for Sustainable Healthcare' was launched during an online consultation.

Join the learning network



IN ACTION

Inventory of medical instruments

The Targeted Call Design 4 Circularity approved a new project that is developing a device allowing hospitals to use artificial intelligence to track any medical instrument. This also responds to the stricter European regulations surrounding medical devices.

More information

06 Circular and Fair ICT Pact (CFIT).

CFIT is an international partnership that aims to accelerate circularity, fairness and sustainability in the ICT sector. The Department for the Environment, along with the Dutch central government, is organising a Flemish-Dutch 'ICT Buyer Group' to promote knowledge sharing among ICT buyers.

In June, the international CFIT meeting was held in Antwerp, where in-depth discussions were held on challenges and behavioural change within circular ICT procurement. A major outcome of this three-day meeting is the intention to establish a Community of Practice (CoP) around ethical and circular ICT procurement. This CoP will meet regularly to discuss challenges and best practices, with support from external experts. In addition, webinars and Buyers Groups were organised in September and November.

More information about CFIT

07 Events

Finally, at Circular Flanders, we believe that the power of the circular economy lies in collaboration between people and organisations. It is strong networks and open minds that keep the circles moving.

On 11 June, MoTIV and Circular Flanders organised a match-making event for corporate textiles and professional clothing. More than 100 purchasers, providers and facilitators came together to share their expertise and present the latest circular developments. During the event, some helpful tools and guidelines were presented that support purchasers in drawing up circular specifications and encourage the development of sustainable products.

In partnership with
Manufacturing Industry Strategic Agenda
The Community Event for the Food Chain Strategic Agenda was held on 26 November. This event was themed around sharing best practices and providing practical tools to promote circular catering procurement and sustainability reporting within the food chain.

In partnership with
Food Chain Strategic Agenda

Internationally, Circular Flanders was also active. On 13 and 14 March, for example, we participated in the Procura+ Conference in Lisbon, which honed in on sustainable public procurement.

At the World Circular Economy Forum, we had our session 'Procuring Change: Navigating the Circular Economy Through a Strategic and Social Lens' as one of the highlights. With some lively discussions and practical examples, we offered a greater insight into the strategic and social aspects of circular procurement.

In addition, Circular Flanders helped shape the WeBuySocialEU training on 5 June. This training, focused on the integration of social and circular criteria into public procurement, provided some valuable insights for both purchasers and suppliers, thus contributing to the further sustainability of the market.





03 LEVER POLICY INSTRUMENTS

Within the Policy Instruments Lever, we focus on the broader policy instruments for the realisation of a circular economy: regulations, subsidies, taxes, product standardisation and incentives for recycling and eco-design, covenants, etc. We bring together partners from the social pentagon to identify the various policy barriers and levers. Thanks to this active coordination with all stakeholders, we arrive at solutions, with support from the Circular Economy Policy Research Centre. Special attention is paid to policy and action in cities and municipalities, within and outside Flanders.

The Policy Instruments Lever creates the bass line for the circular symphony. Find out here what that sounds like

INITIATORS

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VLAANDEREN CIRCULAIR

POLICY INSTRUMENTS

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Intra-Belgian Platform for Circular Economy

Through the Policy Instruments Lever, Circular Flanders participates in the Intra-Belgian Platform for Circular Economy. This consultation platform arose from a strong initiative by Circular Flanders and OVAM, and brings together the Belgian regions and the federal level. This is important, because in our country, the powers to solve the bottlenecks for a circular economy are divided between those different levels.

The mission of the Intra-Belgian Platform for Circular Economy is to work on and develop proposals for Belgian circular economy issues. In doing so, the platform has the possibility of submitting dossiers requiring political validation to the Interministerial Conference on the Environment, extended to economics.

Work has continued over the past year to implement a roadmap for circular construction, focusing on the following priorities:

- Establishing a technical framework in terms of certification and standardisation for the reuse of construction products. Studies show that the lack of such a framework hinders the financing and insurability of construction projects.
- Legislation on public procurement and circular purchasing. Several brainstorming sessions with experts from the various regions were organised, resulting in a recommendation note around the 'comply or explain' mechanism for public contracts. In other words, if an authority wants to award solely on the basis of price, it must justify this. This is to ensure greater use of circular and sustainable award criteria in public contracts. This paper will be presented at the plenary meeting for all the stakeholders involved.
  In collaboration with
- Indicators and the use of TOTEM, a tool to measure a building's material footprint.

Circular Procurement Lever

Discover the study here



POLICY INSTRUMENTS

02 Strategic Agendas

In collaboration with the various Strategic Agendas, the overviews of bottlenecks were further refined over the past year. Several bottlenecks around taxation were included by the FPS Finance in a Working Paper on tax recommendations in a circular economy. These included the VAT issue surrounding donation of food.

Actions around obstructive legislation for food

Note on risks associated with imports of recycled plastics within EEA (electrical and electronic apparatuses) products

In recent years, the European market has been flooded with recycled plastics from various regions of the world. A note was drafted within the chemistry/plastics Strategic Agenda, which is being monitored through the Policy Lever.

Chemicals/Plastics Strategic Agenda

03 Investment deduction

The Policy Lever provided the input needed on the circular economy in the creation of the thematic environmental list for the updated investment deduction. An increased deduction provides a tax incentive for companies operating in a circular economy.

04 Green Deals

The Policy Lever also engaged with stakeholders from the Green Deal for Renting and Sharing, the Green Deal for Differently Packaged and the Green Deal for Sustainable Healthcare. Where necessary, things were clarified, bottlenecks listed or questions posed to the relevant policy level.



05 Creation of an interactive tool around Product-as-a-Service

In collaboration with VLAIO and the CE Center, the integration of the study Model clauses for Product-as-a-Service contracts' into an interactive tool is being looked at. Through the provision of model contracts, we are aiming to better support innovators who want to take the step towards greater circularity.

CE Support Center

POLICY INSTRUMENTS

LOKAAL CIRCULAIR



Lokaal Circulair is specifically aimed at local authorities: all cities and municipalities, intermunicipal associations, provinces. In short: all governments that are not Flemish, federal or European. Local authorities play a crucial role in rolling out the circular economy, both within their own operations and in collaboration with citizens and local innovators.

Successful local circular policies engage instruments, perspectives and partners specific to the local level. Local authorities, cities and municipalities, as well as inter-municipalities and provinces, do expect a framework, guiding objectives, solid support and the opportunity to learn (together).

During the 2024 election year and in view of the preparation of local policy programmes for the new legislature, these efforts to reach out to local authorities were greatly increased.

Discover here what is possible at the local policy level

INITIATORS

VLAANDEREN CIRCULAIR

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IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Community of Practice Lokaal Circulair

Circular Flanders launched the community of practice Lokaal Circulair in 2022, an informal programme aimed at cities, municipalities, inter-municipalities and provinces. An offer of tailored local challenges, one-on-one mentoring, a training programme, actions to increase support for vision-shaping and encourage project operation.

We also enhanced collaboration to ensure coherence between European, Flemish and local policies. Through policies, climate action plans and achievements, a great many local authorities are showing how much they embrace the circular economy, making them among the leaders in Europe. Still, there is much work to be done to embed and implement circular principles everywhere.



IN ACTION

Tools for vision, strategy and action for local authorities
This guide explains the role of local authorities, indicates how a local authority can get started, and is based on the experiences from the guidance programmes carried out with a number of local authorities. Möbius supported these programmes on behalf of Circular Flanders. The VVSG provided support as to their content throughout.

View the guide here



IN ACTION

Circular renovation of Roeselare city hall
Circular Flanders brought the circular renovation of the historic city hall of Roeselare to European attention in an online working group on the theme of Circularity in buildings of public interest.

Read more about the circular renovation

02 KARMA

Circular Flanders is also deploying European funds to strengthen its circular ambitions in Flemish cities and towns.

With the interreg Europe project KARMA, the seven European project partners are aiming to embed circular strategies and actions in the built-up environment into a local or regional policy instrument, typically a climate plan. In Flanders, we are exploring the possibilities of the Local Energy and Climate Pact (LEKP).



IN ACTION

KARMA in Europe

In 2024, KARMA extensively shared knowledge and experiences during three multi-day partner meetings in Calabria, Hungary, Germany and Austria. These meetings included workshops, site visits and presentations on circular strategies in the built-up environment and their link to local and regional climate policies.

Read more about KARMA in Calabria

03 CCRI

Circular Flanders has been one of the pilot regions for the Circular City and Regions Initiative (CCRI) since July 2022. The CCRI was established by the European Union as part of the circular economy action plan to implement circular economy in all European cities and municipalities. Circular Flanders, as a pilot region, receives support from the CCRI, on the one hand, in pushing forward the circular transition in Flemish cities and municipalities, and developing new initiatives. On the other hand, Circular Flanders is inspiring the other municipalities and regions in the CCRI community with its experiences and achievements, and Circular Flanders participates in CCRI activities such as the thematic working group on construction.

04 Communities of Practice

In 2024, Circular Flanders started as one of the project partners for the CCRI Communities of Practice (Horizon). The CCRI Communities of Practice help cities and regions work together on circular solutions. They promote learning from one another through knowledge sharing and networking. Alongside the communities of practice, they also organise a twinning programme and further training sessions. 2024 was a year of preparations, so that the 'call for interest' could be widely shared in early 2025.



IN ACTION

Municipality of Zoersel demonstration project

The municipality receives support for the circular renovation of a multi-purpose library, coupled with social housing. With a number of expertise days, VITO is providing support in finding solutions to financial barriers in the EHHUR (re)construction project attributed to the (short-term) additional costs of circular solutions. The added values of a circular approach are often less visible to local authorities, so the approach in Zoersel was an eye-opener at one of the European CCRI meetings.

View the EHHUR project

05 Circular Cities Declaration

Cities like Bruges, Ghent, Leuven, Mechelen, Hasselt, Roeselare and also Temse signed the 'Circular Cities Declaration'. The European Circular Cities Declaration aims to accelerate the transition from a linear to a circular economy in Europe, thus creating a resource-efficient, low-carbon and socially responsible society.

All about the Circular Cities Declaration



IN ACTION

City of the future

The event 'The city of the future' organised by Flanders Technology and Innovation (FTI) gave ample attention to circularity as one of the sustainable innovations in an urban context. During the event, the Circular Cities Declaration was signed by the city of Hasselt.

Circular inspiration during FTI in Hasselt



IN ACTION

COCON Sint-Niklaas

Sint-Niklaas also signed the Circular Cities Declaration in 2024, giving space for social and circular initiatives. The city purchased the site and invested in the development of COCON. This new social and circular incubator is more than just a physical space; it is a vision for a circular future. It is a story that is being written along with innovators, the city and social organisations. A place where materials are reused, shared and repaired and where knowledge and 'gusto' come together.

More about COCON

06 Publications

In 2024, we launched several new publications to help local policy-makers get started. Here, we will share some important ones in advance.



IN ACTION

Local Climate Plans and circular economy

Local sharing and reuse projects have a positive impact on the climate. This study calculated the impact of circular actions at 5 Flemish pilot municipalities. Second hand shops, shared cars and reuse of construction materials show huge potential to save on CO2. The researchers are calling upon local authorities to expand these practices, and the Flemish government to support them in this with a simple and reliable calculation model.

View the guide and blog here



IN ACTION

Local Circular Construction Brochure

Leading up to the Flemish elections, the focus was on local authorities and climate policy. Circular Flanders, along with the VVSG, published a recruiting brochure 'Local Circular Construction' for circular actions in the built-up environment. This brochure, based on the ambition map for circular construction, was also shared internationally with the help of the CCRI.

The city of Bruges signed Circular Cities Declaration



CIRCULARPORTS

"Ports are stepping stones to a circular economy. However, the path that ports take is often covered with uncertainty, challenges and a lack of clarity. Circular Flanders' Circular Ports initiative offers a very necessary holistic view of the wide range of issues at play for the circular economy at ports. By combining research insights and best practices, it offers a unique insight into what the circular economy means for ports' strategy, governance and operations."

Theo Notteboom
Professor of Maritime and Port Economics at Ghent University

With the Circular Ports operation, Circular Flanders is aiming to do its part to contribute to the circular transition at the Flemish ports. Port areas are key hotspots for that transition. Reciprocally, the circular economy also offers new economic opportunities to our Flemish companies and ports. For that reason, circular economy was also explicitly included under the objective 'Sustainable growth and development' in the Flemish Port Strategy.

Circular Ports aims to create space to learn together, experiment and look for workable solutions for a circular future at our Flemish ports.

Find out all about circular ports here

INITIATORS

VLAANDEREN CIRCULAIR



CIRCULAR PORTS

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Chair of Circular Port Monitoring in Flanders

The Chair 'Circular Port Monitoring in Flanders' was launched on 3 April 2024, a collaboration between Circular Flanders, Vrije Universiteit Brussel and the three Flemish seaports. The Chair will continue to work on developing a monitoring system to measure the socio-economic impact of the circular transition at ports. Both the partnership and the innovative research topic make this Chair unique in the world.

circularports.vlaanderen-circulair.be

> With this Chair, we are demonstrating our commitment, along with our partners, to encouraging innovation and supporting the transition towards a circular economy at our Flemish seaports. Close collaboration with industry and businesses is invaluable, as it enables the rapid dissemination of knowledge to the shop floor and leads to concrete, practical applications with a tangible impact on society and the environment.

Pieter Ballon
Vice-Rector of Research at the VUB

02 Communication

Circular Ports is eager to inspire and motivate. One way we do this is by sharing concrete circular cases, publications and specific knowledge on the Circular Ports website. Our newsletter is published four times a year, each time highlighting a different circular topic relevant to the port community. We also like to share the latest news and examples of best practice on the LinkedIn page.

Circular Ports on LinkedIn



04 LEVER FINANCING

Attention to circularity is also increasing in the financial sector. Nevertheless, there is a need for a clear investment policy, including the appropriate and watertight assessment of circular economy funding cases. This is because, in practice, the current valuation principles of financial institutions are not adequate for the new way of working.

Read here how the Fincancing Lever helps close the loop

INITIATORS

febelfin

PMV

FINANCING

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Wide advisory board group

To gain a greater insight into circular finance issues, two working sessions were organised in 2024. During the first working session, the various funding issues were discussed within the advisory board using case studies.

Based on these findings, some priorities were set during the second working session.

In the coming period, a Risk Working Group will be established, where financial experts will work to identify circular risks. This will be an attempt to give financial players greater insight.

The Fincancing Lever creates growth opportunities for circular projects and addresses bottlenecks at the source. Among other things, we are focusing on the link between the EU Taxonomy and funding.





IN ACTION

FINMIX

Companies with innovative challenges and solid growth ambitions can present their ideas to a panel of funding experts during the FINmix sessions, organised by VLAIO.
In 2024, five ambitious sustainable companies were invited to come and present their business plan at this VLAIO FINMIX.
Experts advise on the business plan and the most appropriate funding mix.
Three FINMIX sessions will also be taking place in 2025.

Find out all about FINMIX here



05 LEVER JOBS & SKILLS

In 2024, with the Jobs and Skills Lever, we not only shared insights from research, but also highlighted numerous training initiatives. The Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union played a crucial role in enhancing our strategies and collaborations. With the core group, we also followed the progress of concrete projects, such as the EU MICHELLE project on circular scenarios focusing on labour market effects and bottleneck occupations.

Structural initiatives were also discussed, such as the integration of green skills into vocational qualifications, and the action plan for promoting vocational qualification pathways. This should increase supply among providers, such as employers and sectors, and provide solutions to the labour shortage with green and digital skills.

Read and learn all about the Jobs & Skills Lever here

INITIATORS

DEPARTEMENT WERK & SOCIALE ECONOMIE

JOBS & SKILLS

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Green jobs and 'Circular work(s)'

The transition to a circular economy presents our society with many challenges and as many opportunities, such as, for example, the needs but also opportunities of the labour market. The Jobs & Skills Lever is committed to preparing properly to face those changes and provide the necessary helping hands.



IN ACTION

The social economy at the core of transitions

In the EU Presidency, we had a two-day event with contributions from the social-circular hubs and the circular bicycle company Mo-Cyclette. More than 600 social innovators, experts, scientists, policy-makers and other stakeholders shared their experiences about good practices, inspirational examples and lessons learned.



IN ACTION

Extension of Circular work(s)

In 2024, the operation of the social circular hubs was extended, with a strong focus on further growth and achieving new impact. This extension allows the 12 existing partnerships to continue their activities until June 2025. The emphasis is on supporting and developing concrete projects and cases, through which we embed the circular economy locally and reach new target groups. At the World Circular Economy Forum, the session 'Circular Hubs: multilevel approach creating impact in practice' led to the creation of the Leadership Group for Circular Hubs within the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. De Keet shared its experiences with other European hubs back in December during an #EUCircularTalk.

Find out more about the hubs here

02 Circular training in view

In 2024, the Jobs & Skills Lever created a starting point for training on circular economy at Circular Flanders' learning hub. Here, you will find an overview of various circular training programmes and pathways. This platform provides a handy guide for anyone looking for training in the circular economy, from secondary to higher education and vocational programmes. Training offerings are updated regularly to guarantee up-to-date information.

To the learning hub



IN ACTION

Educational support

In 2024, through various educational actions, we introduced the circular economy to students and professionals. Circular Flanders actively supported the reworking and/or launch of 10 training programmes. The circular offering on the KlasCement platform, which teachers use for educational materials, achieved 22,664 views, more than 2,711 downloads and a user score of 4.4/5.

Discover everything on KlasCement



IN ACTION

Circular Ambassador Program (CAP)

The third edition of the Circular Ambassador Program (CAP) trained up 50 enthusiastic participants to become Circular Ambassadors. During this intensive training programme, they learned how to advance the circular transition within their own organisations and communities. Participants were given some practical tools and techniques for promoting the circular economy and inspiring others. All the training materials, such as the script and training content, are available via download. In addition, preparations have begun for a European edition in 2025.

Read all about the third edition of CAP here

03 Raising awareness on circularity

IN ACTION

Ecodesign Awards

For the student Ecodesign Award, 2024 edition, the challenge was again to find solutions to current, relevant social problems. The jury, consisting of partners such as Flanders DC, VITO, Design Museum Gent, Knack Weekend, Dott Achilles and Studio D, selected six winners in a range of categories. These partners provide the winners with specific support within their fields, enabling the students to further develop and implement their innovative ideas.

Discover all the winners here



IN ACTION

Ecodesign Challenge

Nearly 200 students were challenged to design rental and sharing models in Ghent during the Ecodesign Challenge. During the two-day event, young designers from colleges across Flanders will devise concepts that contribute to a circular economy. This edition was organised along with partners from the Green Deal for Renting and Sharing to explore the theme of 'sharing': how do you make it easier to share products you don't use every day?

Discover the solutions found here





06 LEVER COMMUNICATION

As Circular Flanders's marketing team, the Communication Lever is a supporting factor for all Strategic Agendas and Levers. This branch inspires and informs through newsletters, blogs, videos, etc., activates through events and thus contributes to the growing awareness of both the circular economy and the efforts of the Circular Flanders partnership.

Wondering how the Communication Lever is giving the circular economy a stage?

INITIATORS

VLAANDEREN CIRCULAIR

COMMUNICATION

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 Websites

The Communication Lever is responsible for building and maintaining the landing pages of the various Circular Flanders projects. In this way, each initiative is maximally available and accessible online to existing and new stakeholders.
In 2024, we started building an updated general website. This will integrate all the information into one clear structure. The new site will be launched in 2025.

https://www.vlaanderen-circulair.be/en

The Renting and Sharing website was also revamped with support from the Circular Flanders communications team.

www.hurendelen.be (In Dutch)

In addition, the CE Monitor was updated and we implemented some new features that made the site more interactive. In collaboration with CE Support Centre

www.cemonitor.be



COMMUNICATION

02 Social media

In 2024, there was a firm commitment to owned media (Circular Flanders's own channels) and earned media (mentions by external parties, including the press). We also launched a LinkedIn campaign in 2024 to lead new organisations towards the Strategic Agendas. This produced strong organic growth across social media channels. There is a slight drop with Facebook due to a general decline in popularity of the platform. Twitter/X also saw a big drop due to the controversy surrounding the platform's acquisition.

LinkedIn

10,040
FOLLOWERS

Accounting for a growth of
+32%

Growth of engagement (likes and comments) of
+113%

Facebook

3,450
FOLLOWERS

Growth of
+1%

Growth of engagement (likes and comments) of
-36%

Instagram

4,050
FOLLOWERS

Growth of
+11%

Growth of engagement (likes and comments) of
+20%

Twitter / X

5,285
FOLLOWERS

Growth of
-9%

No information available on engagement growth.



03 Content creation

The Communication Lever translates the circular work of the various Strategic Agendas and Levers into inspirational, informative and/or engaging content, with particular attention to video.

Discover the videos here

163 new doers were added to the doer database.

Circular cases

The general newsletter was packed with information every month. Each Strategic Agenda was given its own thematic newsletter, which was sent out every quarter to relevant stakeholders. Other theme-specific newsletters were also introduced, including on Lokaal Circulair, Circular Ports and the various Levers.

In collaboration with Knack Weekend, partner in the student ecodesign award, we also created a podcast series. This has been viewed more than 45,000 times via socials.

Listen to the podcast Allez Circulez

04 Events

The Communication Lever was also closely involved in the organisation of several events in 2024. Among other things, at the Circular State of the Union, the Belgian Acceleration day at the WCEF as part of the European Presidency, but also the various events for the Strategic Agendas and Levers.



IN ACTION

Film: circular economy in Belgium

For the European Presidency, Circular Flanders made a promo film about the circular economy in Belgium in collaboration with the regions and the federal government. We based it on Belgian icons to highlight our fantastic circular entrepreneurs.

Watch the promo film here

COMMUNICATION

05 Effective communication

Circular Flanders is committed to maximum impact by choosing a good mix of different channels and messages. By using various behavioural change techniques, we hope to convince even more people to make the move to circular actions.

In 2024, we also started measuring the effectiveness of messaging on social media in order to communicate in a more targeted and effective way.



IN ACTION

Wavemaker session: how to sell the circular economy

On 25 June, an inspiring Wavemaker session took place from the King Baudouin Foundation in collaboration with weareDaniel, VITO and Circular Flanders. The event focused on sustainable behavioural change in the context of a circular economy. Speakers Koen Thewissen and Nick Davids shared some valuable insights and practical tips on how to adapt our communications to inspire people to take action.

Read more about effective behavioural change



07 LEVER RESEARCH

The CE Center (or the Circular Economy Support Centre) unites researchers from KU Leuven, Hasselt University, Ghent University, the University of Antwerp, and VITO.

The CE Center carries out scientific research into how the government can monitor, encourage, and contextualise the circular economy. The intention is to translate the scientific insights into support and recommendations for the policy, and to make this knowledge available to policy-makers, stakeholders, and the general public. In addition, the CE Center is developing a scientific knowledge network that will position itself at a national and international level as a knowledge centre for the circular economy.

The CE Center combines long-term research with short-term projects. For example, researchers work on specific cases that cut straight through the various research domains.

The Research Lever, in turn, identifies the research needs from the Strategic Agendas and the other Levers and makes the bridge to the CE Center.

CE CENTER Circular Economy Research Centre

INITIATORS

RESEARCH · CE CENTER

IMPACT PROJECTS 2024

01 CE Monitor

Leading up to the Circular State of the Union event in March, the entire CE Monitor was thoroughly updated and provided with the latest data.
At present, the monitor contains almost 100 indicators. Thus, material productivity was added as an economic performance indicator, as well as overarching figures on repair activities in Flanders.

Through the update, the monitor is better able to help guide the transition as well: higher R strategies are more explicitly in focus. A number of indicators were provided with policy targets, so that progress on the materials footprint target can now be read. At the same time, the monitor also offers a look at knowledge gaps, such as the quality of recycled materials, for example.

In preparation for the next planned update in 2026, researchers are currently building insights on how the monitor can even more effectively provide figures and support CE policy in Flanders.

IN ACTION

Interactive website

The website was made a lot more interactive through the infographic 'material flows in Flanders', which allows the visitor to discover the relationship between the main indicators. The picture evoked by the figures is in line with the analysis made in 2021 when the monitor was launched:

- we are seeing major material consumption in Flanders
- a reduction in waste production
- an increasing commitment to recycling: a clear focus in Flanders on separate collection and the development of a recycling industry

Discover the CE Monitor



02 CE Center

Following the new mandate, begun in 2022, the CE Center has since reached full cruising speed, with the research team firmly on track, initial results and, at the same time, ongoing conversations to align knowledge building with policy needs. We will describe some examples here.

The recent policy focus on productivity continues in research through, firstly, a modelling study to get a feel for a potential target as to material productivity, and secondly, the launch of a new line of research that will focus on circular decisions in business processes.

Research on the quality of jobs in the circular economy: people would like to see that the CE is, at the same time, an engine for jobs, but the question is whether the jobs that are created are also pleasant, valuable and correct in respect of those who perform them. In this way, we are also exploring the link between CE and social justice.

We are extensively studying what strategies may help counteract food loss, and beyond that, what types of stakeholders are inclined to take what kind of action. This way, policy effectiveness can be anticipated by explicitly including the expected behaviour of actors in the research.

Subscribe to our newsletter to be the first to know about new publications.

Subscribe here for all the news



IN ACTION

Lifespan extension of products

As part of the European Union's Green Deal, the European legislature has drafted legislation to transform the European economy into a circular economy. One of the focal points of that legislation is extending the lifespan of products. Measures to prevent the premature obsolescence of products, their components and materials will ensure their continued circulation and reduce the need for new materials.

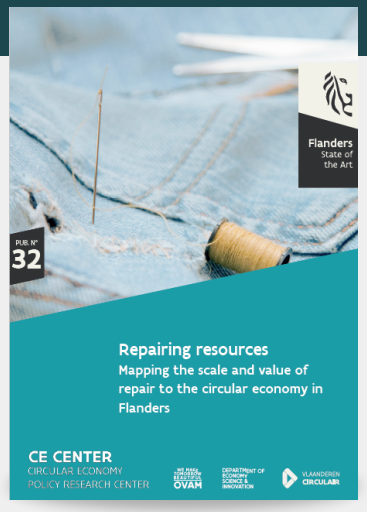
Read more

IN ACTION

Repairing resources

This background report provides some further guidance in calculating the repair figures in the CE Monitor. Repair is a key element in any circular economy strategy: it prevents resource depletion, keeps goods in circulation for longer and reduces the environmental impact of the energy needed for new products. It is considered a higher R strategy, more sustainable compared to lower R strategies, such as recycling.

Read more





IN ACTION

Repair indicators

This paper provides further guidance on the indicators, as shown on cemonitor.be, which paints a picture of repair. More specifically, it is about the Repair Indicator and the Repair Sector.

The data was obtained from three sources: the household budget survey, NACE-based business statistics as found on Eurostat and a mapping of the sector conducted by Repair & Share and Repair Together.

Read more



RESEARCH

03 TOOLS for a just transition

In 2024, Ivy Bosmans, a circular economy intern from the 'Advanced Business Management' course at the UCLL, investigated how the Circular Flanders partnership could contribute to a just, circular economy. The main focus was on poverty and the affordability of circular solutions. The results of this study were presented to a broad group of stakeholders in June.

Read more about the study here

IN ACTION

Matchmaking event: Researcher seeks question

In 2024, the Research Lever organised a matchmaking event 'Researcher seeks question', with the goal of broadly capturing research questions. This should lead to a more coherent approach to framing the various issues into an overall research agenda. Researchers gave an insight into their projects and questioners were given a stage to pitch their questions. Some valuable contacts were made, as the survey showed afterwards.

Read more



VLAANDEREN

CIRCULAIR

Together towards a circular economy for Flanders

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