

LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

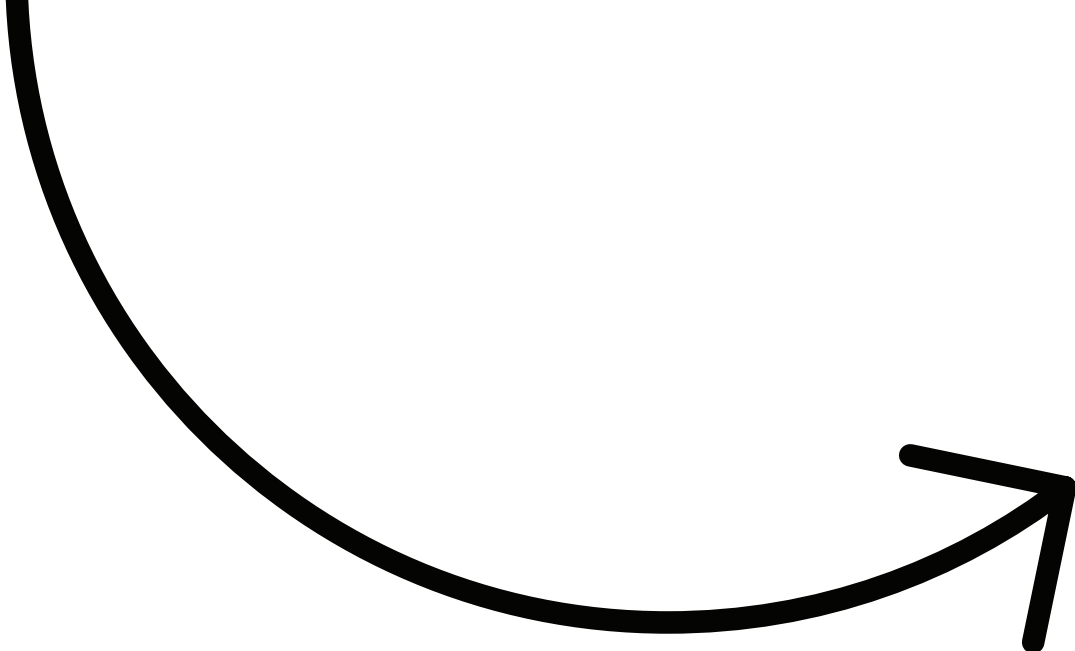
Paving the way for a circular
transition of cities









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Let's get started!



Links to content

Start the Mini quiz:

www.canva.com ► [CE Quiz](#)

Website LET'S GO CIRCULAR!:

www.urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular

Follow us:

www.linkedin.com/company/let-s-go-circular

Quotes and lessons learned



Dr. Christian Scharpf

City of Munich

Head of Department of Labor and Economic Development

The circular economy brings together key issues: environmental protection and economic progress. Supporting the URBACT-funded LET'S GO CIRCULAR! project was therefore particularly important to me. The result – ten local action plans for the strategic support of circular change – is impressive, but can only be seen as a starting signal. We need even more cities across Europe to adopt circular economy in their strategies. With our final report, we invite you to delve deeper into the topic and benefit from the diverse insights and learnings gained from the direct cooperation between European cities.



Christine Kugler

City of Munich

Head of Climate and Environmental Protection Department

Our current economic models – characterised by “take, make, dispose” – are reaching planetary and economic limits. Global crises, geopolitical tensions, and disrupted supply chains have made it clear that we must realign our approach. The safeguarding of resources and the strengthening of local value chains are no longer merely ecological concerns, but decisive location factors for Europe's future. It is evident that only through a consistent circular economy in Europe we will be able to achieve our ambitious climate targets and attain climate neutrality. Our network's ambitious action plans are paving the way – LET'S GO CIRCULAR!

Some key lessons from our network

- The exchange of best practices not only sparks fresh ideas and fosters collaboration but also serves as a benchmark and a compelling proof-of-concept.
- Additionally, insights gleaned from the experiences of other cities possess the remarkable ability to sway decision-makers, local partners, and stakeholders alike.
- Procurement serves as a pivotal lever for city administrations, driving meaningful change and innovation.
- It is beneficial to look beyond the immediate horizon and explore complementary topics, such as urban development concepts, as well as cross-cutting themes like digitisation and gender equality.
- Collaboration among cities yields enduring benefits – numerous cities have embarked on or are currently involved in exciting new projects.
- The site visits have been incredibly important in shaping what is possible in each city and how to approach it.
- Cultural differences are enriching as there are so many different approaches to solving the issues, which encourages fresh perspectives.
- A comprehensive method to create a plan that truly works in terms of being realizable, realistic, inspirational, in all kinds of areas.
- Last but not least, friends for the projects to come!

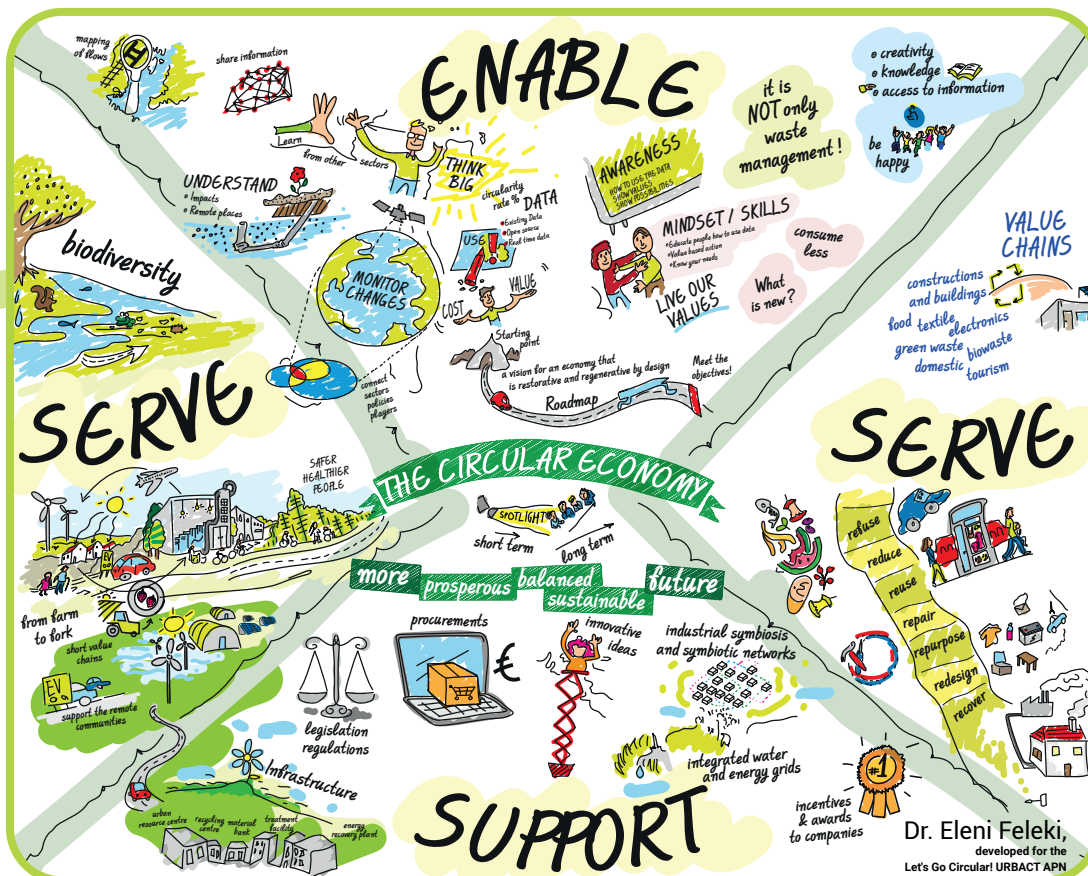


The LET'S GO CIRCULAR! network meeting in Munich in 2023 to kick-off action planning and collaboration!

The circle is complete

Two and a half years ago, the URBACT-funded Action Planning Network LET'S GO CIRCULAR! was initiated with the ambitious objective of developing ten Integrated Action Plans for the circular economy. LET'S GO CIRCULAR! is leading the way toward a sustainable, equitable, and productive transition for cities into a functioning circular economy, addressing all issues pertinent to a comprehensive strategy for circular city ecosystems and fostering innovative solutions. Our partner cities include: Lead Partner Munich (DE), Cluj Metropolitan Area (RO), Corfu (GR), Granada (ES), Guimarães (PT), Lisbon (PT), Malmö (SE), Riga (LV), Oulu (FI), and Tirana (AL).

During our initial meeting, we explored the various factors that help cities successfully advance circular economy principles. The responses are illustrated below: the role of the city is to serve, enable, and support a more balanced, prosperous, and sustainable future. In the following pages, we present a summary of the key findings of our LET'S GO CIRCULAR! journey.



City Snapshots: How 10 cities went circular

At the outset of the project, many partners had embarked on individual initiatives related to the circular economy (CE) or had commenced strategic planning; however, a comprehensive local CE strategy was still lacking. The principal deliverable of LET'S GO CIRCULAR! comprises ten Integrated Action Plans (IAPs), which were co-developed by the cities throughout the project. The partner cities articulated the fundamental components of the IAPs utilising a mutually agreed-upon methodology, under the guidance of an appointed URBACT Lead Expert.

Each city, in collaboration with their URBACT Local Group (ULG) comprising stakeholders and experts, has drafted an IAP. The City Snapshots will offer valuable insights into the backgrounds of the cities, their progress, and the future they envision. The IAPs will now serve as a significant document for city leaders and the public, enhancing understanding and promoting action towards the necessary policy transformations for a circular economy. All IAPs are available on our website urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular

Our Lead Expert, Dr. Eleni Feleki, explains in the video how she contributed to the success of LET'S GO CIRCULAR! and how cities can derive benefits from participating in an Action Planning Network (APN).



Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular

The URBACT toolbox is available to all interested parties. This toolbox offers an extensive set of guides, videos, and templates designed to assist users throughout all stages of the action-planning from problem analysis to result measurement, while also facilitating engagement with local stakeholders and the sharing of knowledge. Through training, tools, and a specific methodology, URBACT enhances the skills and capabilities of city government staff and local stakeholders. The overarching objective is to support cities in the development, implementation, or transfer of participatory and integrated local policies and actions.

Cluj Metropolitan Area

Baseline

The circular economy is part of the NetZeroCities Action Plan, linked to waste management, requiring an integrated approach as in Romania's strategy. Though no specific actions are implemented yet, Cluj-Napoca engages in various initiatives aligned with circular economy principles.



Testing action

One of our testing actions that we consider successful was the introduction of one Vegetarian menu one day per week (Friday) in the Cluj-Napoca City Hall Canteen. The questionnaires before and after the testing days, revealed the openness of citizens to change their behaviour and eat in a more environmentally responsible way.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

We created a Local Group where we invited relevant stakeholders and decision makers. The ULG contributors are coming from different areas of interest, local municipalities and academia, public and private entities, NGOs. The most effective involvement of the stakeholders was in practising the participatory methods and tools that URBACT offers.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

1. Standardise circular design for local and international companies
2. Sustainable procurement in public institutions
3. Re-use of food donations from hypermarkets to care institutions
4. Urban second-hand resource and material exchange center
5. Encourage sharing, incentivise and create online platforms

Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



www.clujmet.ro



Vision of the city

General vision: Cluj Metropolitan Area envisions a sustainable, innovative, and inclusive region fostering economic growth, cultural diversity, and quality living for all residents. **Circularity vision:** Cluj Metropolitan Area metabolism features a high degree of information, awareness and adoption of circular economy practices at the level of public administration, local institutions, business environment and citizens.

According to Google Maps, there are currently 23 shoe repair shops, 43 clothing repair shops, 66 electronics and appliance repair shops, 124 auto repair shops, and 108 second-hand stores in Cluj-Napoca.

January 2026

Start Integrated Action
Plan (IAP) implementation

December 2027

Policy in force –
tax incentives for businesses

December 2026

In place local: food surplus
platform – digital + logistics

December 2028

Permanent repair hub in
Cluj-Napoca in place

December 2029

Finalised “Youth for Circularity”
Campaign in High Schools

December 2030

Finalised IAP
implementation

Corfu

Baseline

Corfu's challenges are mostly linked to the increased tourism flows during the tourist season that go well beyond the island's carrying capacity and that lead to the production of a great amount of waste. The creation of a circularity mindset in citizens is one of the basic targets of the local authorities.



Testing action

The testing action chosen by the stakeholders measured primary school students' level of understanding of circular economy. By collecting and processing these data, the Integrated Action Plan is a powerful tool for designing and implementing a locally engaging circular economy program.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

The ULG consists of citizens and institutions from various sectors and levels of governance. Departments of Education, municipal departments, Corfu's Hotel Association, Chamber of Commerce, Tourism association/HORECA, Technical Chamber and citizens are some indicative ULG members.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

The ULG stakeholders proposed and agreed on the 10 most important CE actions. Top 3:

- Operation of separate biowaste collection network, ensure that at least 25 % of the amounts gathered will be used as soil conditioner at municipal gardens
- Reduction of municipal taxes in households and companies that apply CE principles
- Develop and deliver a CE curriculum for schools and universities

Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



www.kapodistriaki.org.gr



Vision of the city

The main target of the Municipality of Central Corfu and Diapontia Islands is not only a “basic level” of waste management but to put local communities on the path to a circular economy. One of the main goals is to implement information and education strategies and to establish a new philosophy towards recycling.

One of the highlights of the IAP's production was the the testing action. The procedure revealed students' high level of understanding of CE principles. All the students were very motivated and, most importantly, started an effort to engage their parents in circular economy principles.

June 2023

Program starting date – first time for
Kapodistriaki Development SA to join a European Program

October 2024

CE Policy Paper signed by all network partners

September 2025

Hosting all partners in Corfu

December 2025

Completing a very
inspiring journey
after 2.5 years

Granada

Baseline

Granada starts LET'S GO CIRCULAR! from high tourism pressure, lack of CE marketplace and mapping of flows, and poor air quality. A new Sustainability/Urban Agenda department and a consolidated ULG are in place to drive source separation, eco events, Pay as you throw (PAYT) and metro coordination.



Testing action

Bike Hospital: Students refurbish impounded bikes (Sep 2024 – Jun 2025) and launch a pilot bikeshare app. The goals: repair 150 bikes, 2,000 trips/month, which could avoid 15t CO₂/yr. A cross-discipline team and donated parts cut costs/waste. Nex steps: work on app, set governance/financing to scale citywide.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

Granada's ULG is multi-board: technical and internal (city depts.), business/professionals, social and neighbourhoods, energy, plus university, utilities and tourism bodies. The modular design lets us tailor meetings by topic, speed decisions, and sustain strong stakeholder buy-in.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

- Plastic-free events and Granada Circular Seal
- Reverse-vending pilot rewarding returns
- PAYT tariff to raise source separation
- Circular Map & water refill points to guide use
- Community composting in schools/blocks

Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



<https://europagranada.es/mapa-economia-circular-granada>



Vision of the city

Make Granada healthier and more liveable through circularity: cut single-use and waste, boost reuse/repair, green mobility and procurement, engage citizens and SMEs, and monitor progress transparently.

Granada has no longer a wastewater treatment plant, it has a 'biofactory': we extract from wastewater 14Gwh of clean energy and almost 20,000 tons digested sludge used as agricultural fertilizer and compost.

September 2023

First steps in city modelling

October 2025

PAYT tax regulation approval

June 2024

Dustbins digitalization and tracking pilots

January 2025

PAYT comes into force in Granada (first in Andalusia)

Granada will be divided into

400 cells

(325 x 325 m) to check waste differences and variable fees

Guimarães

Baseline

The journey started at a pivotal moment for Guimarães. The project's circular economy focus aligns perfectly with the city's goals of climate neutrality by 2030 and becoming a One Planet City by 2050. With a strong governance ecosystem, the city identified textiles as key for its circular transition.



Testing action

One testing action came to life in the city's vibrant sustainability events, where circularity became something people could feel and experience. Green Week showcased textile sustainability through local brands, artisans and roundtables. These moments showed how circularity can be inspiring and fun.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

Guimarães' ULG united all textile value chain links, from the production to the recovery of textiles, alongside city officials, researchers and waste management experts. The representative and co-creative nature of the local sessions led to a more actionable plan grounded in local needs.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

• Establish a Municipal Circular Economy Taskforce:

A dedicated team that reflects the municipality's strong commitment to circularity, coordinating policies, data and stakeholders to drive a unified and ambitious transition.

• Implement a Training Programme for Textile Sector Circularity:

A capacity-building programme that equips local textile companies with the skills and tools needed to meet new requirements and to improve their circular performance.



www.cm-guimaraes.pt

- **Development of a Circular Textile Hub:**

A shared space where citizens, companies and creators come together to repair, up-cycle, prototype and exchange ideas – a joint hub that brings circular textiles to life.

- **Sustainable Public Procurement Plan for Textiles:**

Guidelines that ensure the municipality leads by example, purchasing textiles that are durable, repairable, and aligned with circularity principles.

- **Plan for the development of a Textile Industrial Symbiosis:**

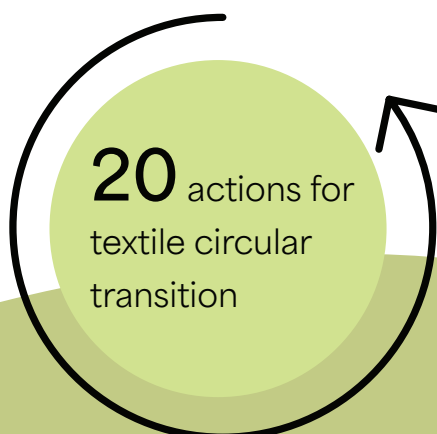
A strategy to connect companies so that one's textile waste becomes another's resource, building local value loops and reducing environmental impact.



Vision of the city

Guimarães envisions a circular textile sector grounded in zero landfilling, innovation and shared responsibility, reinforcing the city's path toward climate neutrality by 2030.

Guimarães' circular path embraces its textile businesses, acknowledging their importance to the local economy and community. The ULG showed genuine interest in staying active, keeping collaboration alive and supporting continuous progress across the sector.



Lisbon

Baseline

Lisbon's pathway towards becoming a more sustainable, climate-responsible, inclusive, and fair city is inseparable from its transition to a more circular economic system. This transition seeks to foster more responsible patterns of consumption and production, connecting dots and leaving no one behind.



Milestone

Organising a day dedicated to fashion and textiles was a milestone in realising that combining “learning by doing” and participating in enlightening conversations about responsible clothing consumption is a powerful tool for changing behaviours and attitudes.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

From the beginning, the Lisbon ULG has been more than a group – it is a community of 36 partners united by a shared vision. Together, we have blended ideas, perspectives, and energy to shape the Lisbon IAP and build a more circular, inclusive, and forward-looking city.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

- Create a Circular Economy Acceleration Program
- Implement a Reusable Construction Materials Bank
- Establish mechanisms to connect producers and consumers in local markets
- Design and implement a regular program of community workshops and activities (repair, upcycling, etc.)
- Introduce circular economy indicators into the Lisbon Observatory Platform

Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



www.lisboaenova.org/en



Vision of the city

A sustainable, responsible, fair, and resilient city in transition toward a more circular, regenerative, and collaborative economy – people-centred and inspiring for the world.

The Whistle of Circularity in Lisbon

Once a familiar sound echoing through Lisbon's streets, the sharp whistle of the amolador announced the arrival of a traveling craftsman. Moving from neighbourhood to neighbourhood on foot or by bicycle, these mobile knife and scissor sharpeners gave new life to old tools – a beautiful, living example of circular economy long before the term existed.



Goal of the city

Lisbon Integrated Action Plan goes beyond concrete actions – it reflects the shared commitment to make Lisbon more circular, sustainable, and resilient. As implementation unfolds, new ideas and goals will keep the transition alive and evolving.

Malmö

Baseline

Malmö focuses on the following:

Changing the norm. The norm is still to shop and consume, not to reduce and reuse.

Reduce emissions. Focus on emission reduction activities by introducing industrial and urban symbiosis.

Engaging actors. Identify key leverage points for the continued circular transition and engage multiple actors.



Milestone

During our journey with the ULG in Malmö, we recognised that the meetings across different sectors lead to discussion about sharing resources (material, energy, water etc.) among each other. From there, the desire arose to create an arena where you can find partners for sharing resources.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

The format of the ULG in Malmö is a mix of “open structure” and “topic sub-groups”. The City of Malmö’s work with the ULG has been a mix of planning and acting together in order to maintain the interest and commitment from the group – do, test and evaluate. The City of Malmö has the privilege to work with the circular transition within two processes – Malmö Climate Transition and LET’S GO CIRCULAR!

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

- Increasing utilisation of recycled textiles, improving recycling of plastics and decreasing food waste.
- The performed resource mappings of textiles, plastics and food – in, out and circulating Malmö’s geographical area. The mappings include volumes, emissions and partly monetary calculations.

Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



www.malmo.se/resurshubben



Vision of the city

A recognized and established belief in circular economy as a driver for the climate transition in Malmö.



We drive the transition together towards a circular, resource-efficient and vital city within the planetary boundaries. By coming together to act, educate, and tackle challenges, we take joint responsibility to achieve a climate neutral, attractive and sustainable Malmö.

Malmö knew that the municipality can contribute to the circular transition through mobilisation and LET'S GO CIRCULAR! gave us the opportunity to:

Build on initiatives from both private, non-profit and municipal sources.

Act and **dare to try**.

Participate **in innovation projects** and national networks.

Develop an **agile roadmap** together with stakeholders.

Munich

Baseline

Munich, with a material footprint of 31 tonnes per capita, faces significant circular economy challenges as a growing, economically strong metropolis. A comprehensive Material Flow Analysis revealed that construction, bioeconomy, products and retail and public procurement are the most significant sectors.



Milestone

The vision of the City of Munich is to become a climate-neutral, resource-friendly circular city that ensures quality assurance for Munich's society and economy. To achieve this, the city council committee approved the Circular Economy Strategy in December 2025.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

Over 100 experts from public administration, business, academia, and civil society participated in a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process. The ULG focused on four value chains: buildings and infrastructure, bioeconomy, products and retail, and sustainable procurement.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

- Urban Mining for Secondary Building Materials – identifying areas for storage and processing of construction waste
- Development of a circular construction hub in the [CirCoFin project](#)
- Industrial Symbioses Eco-Park: establishing circular economy clusters to reduce primary resource consumption
- Circular Procurement Competence Center: providing digital expert support for sustainable public procurement
- Introduction of a take-back concept for reusable tableware: implementing city-wide infrastructure to eliminate single-use packaging

Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



stadt.muenchen.de/infos/kreislaufwirtschaft.html



Vision of the city

By 2035, targets include: 30 % reduction in material footprint, doubling circular material use rate, 2,000 organisations active in circular economy, and 15 % total waste reduction.

As part of Munich's strategy development, a material flow study found that 104.9 million tonnes of materials are imported annually, 65.5 million from abroad and 38 million from Germany. Around 47 million tonnes stay in the city, forming Munich's material footprint: 60 % construction, 16 % products & trade, 10% bioeconomy.

Implementation began
including the CirCoFin
circular construction hub

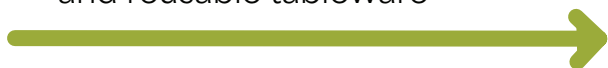
Re:lektro electronics strategy

2025

Urban Mining project

circular economy consultancy

pilots for sustainable procurement
and reusable tableware



Oulu

Baseline

Oulu started its circular economy journey by signing the Circular Cities Declaration. The journey continued with the creation of Oulu's circular economy roadmap, which was completed in 2021. The promotion of circular economy has progressed well, and Oulu has acted as a forerunner in Northern Finland.



Testing action

One of the actions we tested was Circular Arena Oulu. It is an event that brings together stakeholders and citizens to share knowledge and network. The key lessons learned from the first pilot were that securing political commitment and starting the planning process early are essential for success.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

The city's officially established circular economy coordination group guided the roadmap's creation. The ULG-group was established on this basis and includes representatives from municipal departments, subsidiaries, and academia. Its formal status ensures dedicated resources for participation.

Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

- Circular economy criteria for procurement
- Annual circular economy event
- Increasing the circular economy competence of Oulu residents
- Material bank and a management and utilization plan for material flows
- Implement circular economy-based infrastructure construction pilots and zero-emission construction sites

Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



www.ouka.fi/en/circular-economy

Milestone

The circular economy roadmap has proven to be an effective way to advance the city's transition towards circularity. Within the LET'S GO CIRCULAR! project, Oulu's programme has evolved into a more concrete Integrated Action Plan.



Vision of the city

Oulu's vision is to be the most learning circular economy city. We develop and implement sustainable lifestyles in cooperation with businesses, residents, and other stakeholders.

We have learned many valuable lessons from our work so far and from LET'S GO CIRCULAR!. A fun fact is that even though we promote the circular economy through the programme and many people are not fully aware of it, there are still plenty of circular economy practices embedded in everyday routines.



Riga

Baseline

Riga joined the EU Mission “100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030” in 2022, pledging to lead the way toward a sustainable future. Until now, circular economy efforts in Riga have been spread across individual initiatives – this Action Plan brings them together for the first time: a clear, unified strategy for reducing waste, rethinking resources, and building a greener city.



Milestones

Riga turns ambitious ideas into tangible change, combining systemic shifts with everyday solutions – from circular-themed events to regulations phasing out unnecessary packaging, from neighbourhood repair hubs to energy recovery and hidden sources like wastewater. It's a full and rapid shift towards a circular city.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

The Action Plan was shaped through an iterative process that combined data analysis, policy review, and hands-on engagement. Stakeholder workshops, interviews, and city exchanges helped test ideas and refine priorities. Municipal departments, businesses, NGOs, and residents co-developed the measures, ensuring they address local realities.



Goals for a Circular Riga

- Riga residents use infrastructure supporting CE and engage in the implementation of the CE.
- The municipality manages the resources at its disposal in a sound manner.
- Riga is a suitable place for growth and development for businesses applying the principles of the circular economy.

Video on: urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

Eight focus areas – from everyday habits to large-scale infrastructure:

1. **Municipal operations and public open space** – circular procurement, resource-efficient municipal services, and infrastructure
2. **Circular economy points** – repair, reuse, sharing, and community-based circular hubs
3. **Waste management** – zero-waste planning, improved collection systems, and advanced sorting
4. **Culture and manufacturing** – circular business models, creative industries, and sustainable production
5. **Construction** – sustainable construction and renovation practices
6. **Energy** – heat-recovery potential and solar installation on municipal infrastructure
7. **Water consumption** – rainwater harvesting, reuse solutions, and promotion of tap-water use
8. **Mobility and transport** – sustainable mobility solutions and circular materials in transport infrastructure

Circular Riga 2030

2022

Riga selected for the EU Mission
“100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030”

2023

Joined the URBACT LET'S GO CIRCULAR! network

2025

1st edition of Riga's Circular
Economy Action Plan adopted

2030

Implementation of
40 circular actions

Tirana

Baseline

With 863,694 residents (2023), Tirana is Albania's largest and fastest-growing city. Since 2022, the Directorate of Environment has led local circular economy efforts through the newly established Circular Economy and Energy Resources Sector, mapping reuse-oriented SMEs and setting policy foundations.



Testing action

Through the Green Grants pilot, the Municipality supported local businesses adopting reuse and circular models, testing municipal funding as a driver of innovation. The success of this action inspired scaling and inclusion in the city's Integrated Action Plan.

Introduction to URBACT Local Group (ULG)

The Urban Local Group, coordinated by the Directorate of Environment, gathers municipal departments, businesses, and NGOs. It ensures cross-sectoral participation, co-creation, and strong ownership of the Integrated Action Plan for Circular Economy.



Vision of the city

Our city's smart and innovative transformation aims to pioneer a circular economy through innovative business solutions, maximising resource efficiency, and fostering a sustainable urban ecosystem and lasting impact for its citizens.



Integrated Action Plan (IAP)

1. Support for farmers – reusable packaging

Providing local farmers with standardised, recyclable and reusable packaging boxes to replace single-use materials and promote sustainable local food distribution.

2. “Buy Local, Waste Less” campaign

A city-wide awareness and reward campaign encouraging citizens to choose locally produced, low-waste goods in markets and supermarkets.

3. Circular economy hub for SMEs

A municipal hub offering training, resources, and funding opportunities for businesses transitioning toward circular and sustainable models.

4. Green Business Certification Scheme

A program recognising and rewarding businesses for their sustainable practices, helping them gain market advantage and consumer trust.

5. Green events and reuse systems

Integration of reusable cups, plates, and zero-waste logistics in public events, creating new standards through the Green Events Manual.

Tirana established the first local framework for circular economy in Albania, mapping reuse-oriented businesses and launching pilot actions on reuse and green events.

2022

Creation of Circular Economy & Energy Sector

2024

Pilots: Green Grants, Garage sale

2023

Joined URBACT
LET'S GO CIRCULAR! network

2025

Integrated Action Plan finalized



Modules: You can go circular, too!

The following pages are designed as a modular set, allowing readers to employ specific modules based on their individual needs. One of the reasons for setting up the LET'S GO CIRCULAR! action planning network was the realisation that many European cities have already started taking actions to support circularity in their local urban ecosystem, but mostly in a fragmented way and with limited focal points, e.g. waste reduction. However, a holistic strategy is needed, that creates a framework for progressive evolution and provides the information and direction needed to guide local stakeholders, both within and beyond the municipal administration. It also helps stakeholders align their work with the achievement of the city's circular targets.

Our modules are based on these open access key articles from our Lead Expert Dr. Eleni Feleki, linked or available on <https://urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular>:

Transforming Urban Landscapes:

Circular Economy Practices in European Cities. (2025)

Mainstreaming circular economy criteria in public procurements.

The successful case of Lisbon (2024)

From waste to wonder The Successful Case of Guimarães in Shaping a Circular City. (2024)

Mainstreaming circular economy criteria in unused buildings.

The successful case of Riga. (2024)

Oulu' alliance serving digitalization and circular economy. (2024)

Driving circular economy awareness and education across European cities. (2024)

LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Report Circular Malmö. (2024)

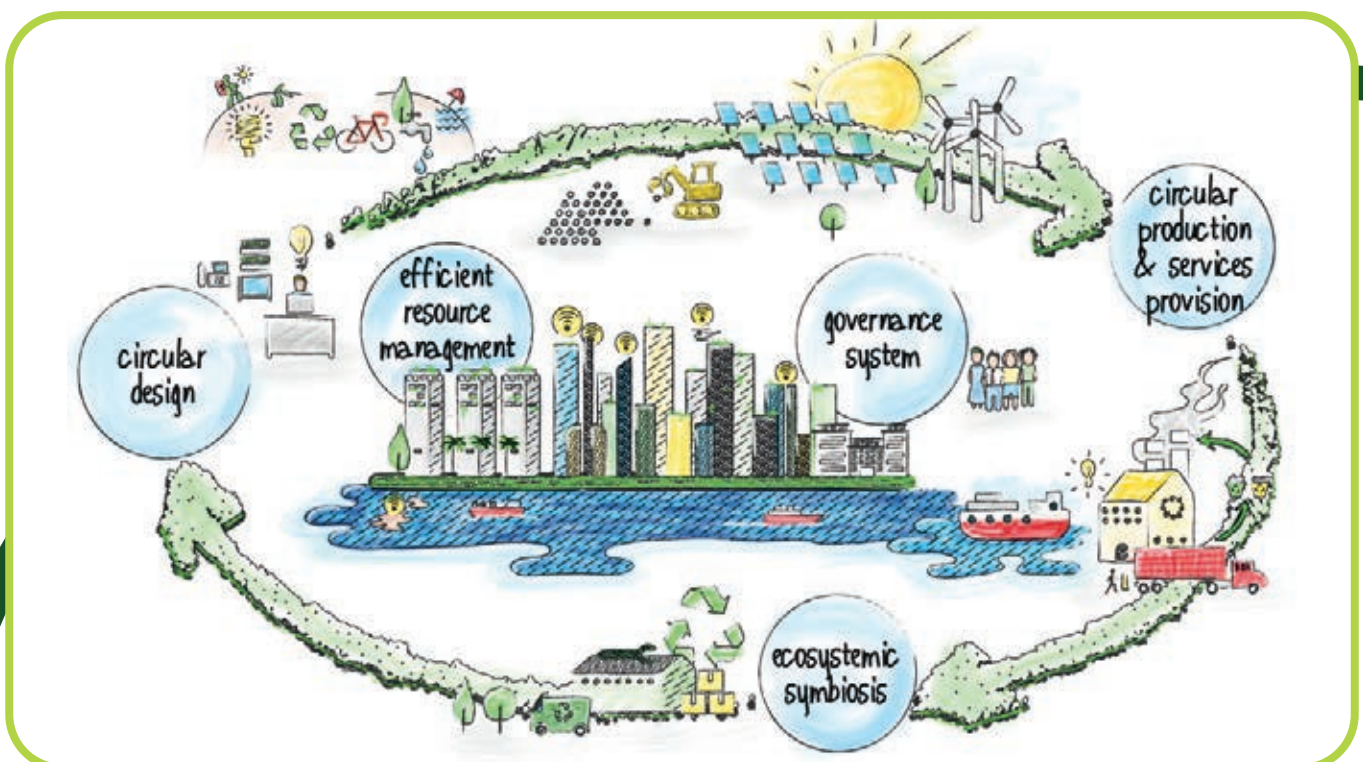
Testing Action Compendium (2025)

Module 1: Circular cities – our definition

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the circular economy is an imperative to deliver on the green transition and to mitigate the growing risks and negative impacts of climate change whilst boosting economic resilience and energy security.

In our understanding, a circular city has embedded the principles of the circular economy across the entire urban area and the important sectors and value chains. It operates within an interconnected network of systems that are designed to enable maximal use of resources, regenerate nature and decrease pollution.

In a circular city, collaboration between citizens, authorities, research facilities, and businesses is achieved. Products, services, infrastructure, buildings, and vehicles are designed to be durable, adaptable, modular, easy to maintain, share and repurpose, and locally sourced and serving consumption. A circular city is powered by renewable energy, everything can be composted, reused, or recycled while nature is flourishing, abundant, and used as design inspiration.



The Circular City model, as illustrated by LET'S GO CIRCULAR! Lead Expert Dr. Eleni Feleki

Module 2: Paving the way

To go circular, it takes a city, a network, and the European Union.

How to start?

The EU sets the visionary framework with directives such as the new Circular Action Plan (CEAP 2) and the Green Deal. To help you prepare to develop your vision, URBACT offers a range of tools for analysing problems and planning actions in their free URBACT toolbox.

Corfu, for example, used the “Problem tree” working with their local stakeholder group to name the most pressing local challenges and “Vision sharing”. See it embedded in their Integrated Action Plan linked on urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular.

Key takeaways along the way

After more than two years of LET’S GO CIRCULAR! we are convinced that a combination of **technology, community involvement, and innovative governance** is essential for embedding CE principles into urban systems and for your strategy. This will not only improve environmental outcomes but also create economic and social benefits, making CE an integral part of sustainable urban development. A more detailed collection of knowledge and experience as inspiration for local authorities is available in the compendium of thematic articles on urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular.

Our network’s mid-term reflection provided a comprehensive overview of efforts to promote circular economy principles across participating cities and beyond. Key takeaways include the importance of stakeholder engagement and the need to tailor methodologies to local contexts. Gain some insights in the article [Shaping Circular Cities](#).

Module 3: Governance and Funding

Governance models – facilitating circular economy transition

Strong governance structures are crucial for coordinating CE initiatives and ensuring their successful implementation. For example, Guimarães employs a Mission-Oriented Governance model, leveraging multidisciplinary teams such as the Landscape Laboratory. They integrate academic, governmental, and citizen stakeholders to co-create and implement CE solutions. Oulu's governance framework focuses on cross-sector collaboration, engaging public and private stakeholders to co-design CE initiatives. Munich has a dedicated strategic Circular Economy Coordination Unit (CEKS).

Key insights from the cities:

- Multidisciplinary teams enhance the scope and impact of CE projects.
- Cross-sectoral collaboration strengthens the resilience and scalability of CE initiatives.
- Participatory governance fosters ownership and ensures alignment with community needs.

EU Framework

Raw materials, products and waste streams in the EU are already subject to a comprehensive set of regulations. Central overarching strategies and regulations on the path to a circular economy at EU level are the EU Circular Economy Package and the EU Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP). The new Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP 2) adopted by the European Commission in 2020 is a central pillar of the European Green Deal. It announces initiatives along the entire life cycle of products.

Funding

Various funding opportunities can support municipal budgets for the circular transition. Combining public, private, regional, national, and EU funds creates a resilient financial strategy. Sources include:

- Financing | European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform
- Circular city funding guide
- Funding and financing | Circular Cities and Regions Initiative
- Horizon Europe, Cluster 6 (current EU funding programme until 2027)
- URBACT

Module 4: Action planning

The key outputs of our project LET'S GO CIRCULAR! are the local Integrated Action Plans (IAPs) that every city has developed following an agreed methodology for their elaboration and in collaboration with their local expert and stakeholders' group (ULG). These action plans serve as a lead document for city leaders and the public to understand and tackle the necessary policy change towards circular economy.

Highlights and risks

You can browse some of our network's outstanding actions in our report on [action planning highlights](#). There you will gain some insight into how the key elements of action planning work together, like in the example of Cluj Metropolitan Area:

- “ **Vision:** Cluj-Napoca Metropolitan Area metabolism features a high degree of information, awareness and adoption of circular economy practices at the level of public administration, local institutions, business environment and among citizens.
Strategic objective: Achieve a 20 % circular material use rate.
Local processes: Specific objective 1 – Introducing CE themes into the formal or non-formal education curriculum. (...)”

In the process of creating an action plan it is also important to address any upcoming potential risks and mitigations. We explored i-PESTLE as a methodology to identify risks categorised under in information, political, economic, social, technological, legal, data-related and environmental. Learn more in the report of our [shared risk assessment](#).

URBACT Toolbox

Action planning is at the core of our EU-funding programme URBACT – which stands for Urban Action. All tools and tips aligned with the URBACT method are available in a [public toolbox](#).

Find our cities' Integrated Action Plans on our website
urbact.eu/networks/lets-go-circular



Module 5: Data and Monitoring

All about numbers ...

Transitioning to a circular economy entails translating circular visions into measurable progress. Strategic objectives bridge the gap between ambition and implementation. To ensure meaningful impact, circular strategies should be based on SMART objectives – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound – accompanied by indicators that effectively capture both actions and results. Furthermore, strategic goals must translate into specific or operational objectives: short-term, measurable steps that drive progress.

A structured monitoring cycle may be represented as follows:

Step 1 – Define: Agree on SMART objectives and corresponding indicators.

Step 2 – Collect: Establish baseline data using reliable municipal and national sources.

Step 3 – Target: Set medium- and long-term benchmarks consistent with EU and SDG frameworks.

Step 4 – Review: Assess results annually and adapt policies accordingly.

Find more guidance in this article

[From vision to measurement: Building SMART Circular Economy objectives and indicators for cities](#)

... and flows

Our network had the chance to learn about “20 years of Material Flows in Lisbon” with [Professor Paulo Ferrão, Instituto Superior Técnico – University of Lisbon](#). He used national data, extrapolated into the local reality. Input-output tables illustrate the way that materials enter a system, how they are processed and disposed. The results link the socio-economic metabolism of a region and country with the mapping of flows and resource efficiency, uncovering impact and interdependencies.

See the article

[Urban Metabolism Characterization from the National to the Regional Scale: A Case Study of Lisbon.](#)

Module 6: Stakeholder Governance, awareness, and education

Education and awareness are pivotal for integrating circular principles into urban life. Successful CE strategies require the effort and involvement of multiple stakeholders. We identified three main target groups: Schools and educational institutions, businesses, and residents/communities.

Key principles include:

- **Facilitating direct interaction** with CE practices, such as repair workshops and upcycling projects, increases understanding and adaption.
- **Community engagement:** Educational initiatives, vocational training, and participatory activities engage citizens, ensuring long-term behavioural changes and support.
- **Schools and local organisations** are effective platforms for CE education.
- **Linking training programs** with local industries maximises economic and environmental impact.
- **Social inclusion:** Initiatives that involve vulnerable groups not only support community integration but also enhance public buy-in for circular practices.
- **Digital tools:** Platforms supporting information sharing, resource management, and educational content amplify the reach and efficiency.

City examples

- **Guimarães** established the ‘Green Brigades program’ showing the involvement of civil society to preserve local natural capital, launched by the City Hall, while the Landscape Laboratory offered knowledge and technical support.
- **Lisbon’s** urban gardening initiatives under the food action plan engage communities in sustainable food production and composting practices.
- **Munich’s** sustainable education initiative ESD Vision 2030 works with schools and universities to integrate CE into curricula, preparing future generations to adopt sustainable practices.
- **Tirana’s** Circular City Labs reduce GHG emissions through waste prevention with a focus on reusable packaging and the strengthening of the role of women in local CE.

Stakeholder integration

The URBACT LOCAL Group (ULG) is a fundamental tool that enables experimentation for innovation in city administrations. The ULG is an active working group that will bring together relevant local stakeholders related to the challenge being tackled. It reflects local structures, priorities and actors. We highly recommend setting up some kind of stakeholder group to support embedding CE in your city.

Key questions for designing the ULG or other stakeholder groups:

- Have the key relevant stakeholders been identified and mobilised? Who are they (in terms of city departments, local organisations/agencies, NGOs, civil society, private sector, universities, research centres, etc.)?
- Is there a pre-existing group/forum/platform involving these stakeholders or is this set up as a new group?
- Are there any formal/compliance restrictions?
- How will they meet (online/offline)? Who will oversee the group?
- Do we need to have all the stakeholders at all the meetings or is it preferable to make smaller groups on specific topics? Big groups of more than 10 people are difficult to manage.
- Do we have interactive elements planned to keep the engagement high?

Our first ULG meetings had a clear structure and objectives:

Session 1: Introduction

Session 2: Co-design of strategic objectives and agreement/refinement of them as well as specification of an overall vision.

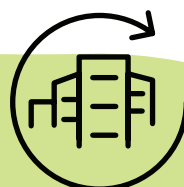
Session 3: Ideation on actions – what should be done?

Session 4: Agreement on the local roadmap with respect to a timeline.

More practical tips:

- There is no perfect number for a stakeholder group.
- The partners benefited from having smaller focused meetings in between the wider stakeholder meetings.
- Mix online and in-person meetings.
- Write down agreements and provide some documentation of results.
- Encourage long-term cooperation early on.

Find more about the ULGs in City Snapshots!



Module 7: Circular Public Procurement

The hidden power of procurement

Europe's Circular Economy Action Plan CEAP 2 aims to strengthen Green Public Procurement by establishing minimum mandatory criteria and targets, but some of our partners have already advanced further. Some key insights:

- Green procurement standards encourage systemic changes in supply chains.
- Local sourcing strengthens regional economies and reduces transportation emissions.
- Digital tools streamline procurement.
- To start experiencing the power of procurement: start small! Malmö introduced public procurement on certain goods (signs, furniture), Riga tested circular criteria in public construction procurements.
- Rely on interdisciplinary teams and offer specific CE training for procurement teams. Adapt and use tools, a guide, a procurement journal, a defined catalogue of questions for decision-making, and templates for the calls for bids.
- Carefully craft contracts and take into consideration CE related aspects as self-sufficient energy supply, material passports, sustainability assessment.

At the same time, stay open to the market. As CE requirements might be a new field to many of the suppliers and standards are lacking, prepare and offer intensified communication. In case the market cannot offer an acceptable circular solution, accept circular development and innovation during the contract period.

Innovative CE procurement

Especially Lisbon, Malmö, and Riga have put forward procurement criteria. Lisbon has developed a Procurement Planning Platform (PPP) as an internal share point to counteract silos between departments and support teamwork. Their strategic focus is on sustainability and innovation (open innovation). See this and further examples in the article [Mainstreaming circular economy criteria in public procurements](#).

Module 8: Replication and Testing Actions

Across the LET'S GO CIRCULAR! network, the ten participating cities have acted as testing grounds for innovative approaches to circular economy, piloting 17 testing actions that demonstrate both the diversity of challenges faced and the creativity of responses developed. These actions, ranging from awareness campaigns and educational initiatives to systemic interventions in procurement, construction, and mobility, have generated practical insights that are now shaping each city Integrated Action Plans.

Conducted in a methodic way, the testing actions are not isolated experiments but stepping-stones towards systemic transformation. Most importantly, each action has generated lessons that are now useful for all cities following the path to circularity. Find more insight in the compendium [Testing Actions to Pave Way for Circular Economy in Cities:](#)

- **Cluj Metropolitan Area:** Metropolitan Caravan, Vegetarian menu in canteens
- **Corfu:** Circular Economy Questionnaire
- **Granada:** Open-Air Festival, Bike Hospital
- **Guimarães:** Textile Waste Management
- **Lisbon:** Circular Shift, Circular Construction Talk, Textile Fashion Day, and Circular Neighborhoods
- **Malmö:** Reusable take-away packaging
- **Munich:** Development of a procurement guideline for a circular canteen/restaurant
- **Oulu:** Circular Economy Arena, Biochar Day
- **Riga:** Sorting furniture workshop series
- **Tirana:** Financial support for businesses focused on reuse, Green events and Material Flow Analysis

LET'S GO 10R!

The 10 R framework offers a nuanced, yet memorable approach. The ten Rs are classified under three categories, or rather loops. The shorter the loop, the more sustainable. Within our network, you can find a range of (planned) 10 R actions in the cities' Integrated Actions Plans.

Short loops focus on smarter product use and manufacture:

R0 Refuse, R1 Rethink, R2 Reduce

Procurement is a strong lever for administrations to refuse products and processes contradicting CE principles. The Lisbon Municipality became the first Portuguese organisation to establish a sustainable procurement system by ISO 20400, certified in 2023. Rethinking approaches span from education to redesign and new business-models like sharing. In Oulu, local schools follow an official "Learning Stream for Sustainable Future". Corfu engaged with its youngest citizens through a Circular Economy Questionnaire, where nearly 360 primary school students demonstrated not only a strong understanding of CE principles but also an infectious enthusiasm to educate their parents. To reduce material footprints and minimise the use of virgin materials, several cities are pursuing circular municipal construction. Riga has established a framework for best practices by dismantling a building and allowing some of its materials to be reused, thereby reducing waste.

Medium loops focus on life extension strategies:

R3 Reuse, R4 Repair, R5 Refurbish, R6 Remanufacture, R7 Repurpose

As this loop is closely connected to the private sector and manufacturers, cities are making efforts to support local economies. Cluj Metropolitan Area plans to introduce a tax reduction for local businesses that demonstrate the use of recycled materials or implement closed-loop production processes. Tirana has successfully tested whether financial incentives can encourage companies to adopt CE principles more systematically in their operations. The promising results and insights gained from the "Green Grants Scheme" motivate Tirana to expand its efforts, seeking EU and international

funding while establishing a local business Circular Economy Hub. In Guimarães, which boasts a thriving local textile sector, the city is promoting the second-hand market and plans to allocate communal space to support sustainable textile consumption habits and establish centres for textile repair and repurposing.

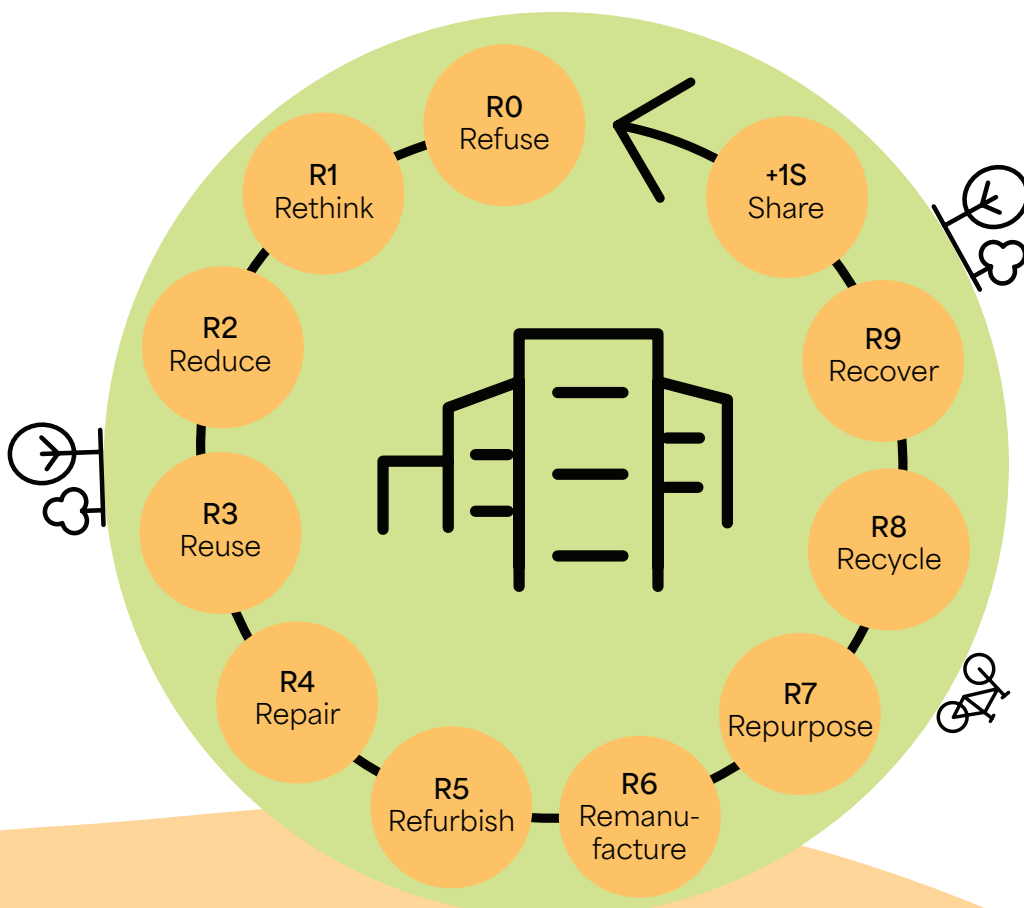
Plus 1S Share:

Granada has piloted a “Bicycle Hospital”, where bicycles that were impounded and left in police depots are refurbished and repurposed for use in a public bike-sharing app. This initiative is supported by a cross-disciplinary team of students.

Long loops focus on creative material application:

R8 Recycle, R9 Recover

In Malmö, the local waste management company Sysav has established the world’s largest automatic textile sorting machines. Although the full capacity of 20,000 tonnes per year in three shifts is not yet fully utilised their technology has the potential to be a game changer for the textile sector. Munich is addressing both consumers and industry to enhance the recycling framework. Planned actions include urban mining for secondary building materials, implementing a tax on packaging, and launching a collection campaign for small electrical appliances in schools, neighbourhoods, and municipal facilities.



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