



European Circular Cities Declaration

Putting Circular Economy into Practice

Support Document

This document accompanies the European Circular Cities Declaration. It presents a common vision and understanding of what the circular economy transition will look like at the local level, highlights the levers for local governments to bring it about, and presents some useful resources to support this process.



Why cities should commit to Circular Economy action

The launch of the **European Green Deal** puts the concept of circular economy at the centre of efforts to transform the European Union into a fair and prosperous society, where economic growth is decoupled from resource use and environmental harm. In light of the socio-economic impact of the current crisis, the road to recovery is an opportunity to rethink the way we do things – to build back in a way that ensures a more resilient future. A systemic shift to a regenerative economic model is fundamental to achieving climate neutrality and keeping resource consumption within planetary boundaries. However, it requires citizen behaviour change and multilevel governance of the transition. Cities and regions have a central role to play in achieving this.

Around 75% of Europeans now live in urban areas, which account for 75% of natural resource consumption. Cities produce 50% of global waste and 60-80% of greenhouse gas emissions.¹ Though cities are major contributors to climate change, material consumption and waste generation, they are also cradles of innovation and socio-economic transformation. Faced with the climate emergency and pressing need to reduce our environmental footprint, and given the intensive resource use and waste generation in cities, now is the time to act.

Local and regional governments manage a number of key sectors in urban areas, such as mobility and waste management, and are ultimately responsible for controlling land use and urban planning. Their public procurement and investment budgets can also play a key role in driving demand for circular products and services and impact decisions on infrastructure for energy, transport and water. For all of these reasons, as well as the mandate to promote wellbeing and responsibly serve their citizens, local and regional governments are called to lead the circular transition.

The international framework for the circular economy

Circular economy measures implemented should also make progress towards compliance with international sustainable development frameworks, such as the UN's **Sustainable Development Goals** and the **Paris Agreement**. The European Green Deal and new **EU Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP)** outline comprehensive strategies to make Europe carbon neutral by 2050, involving a transformed industrial strategy, an expanded **Ecodesign Directive** and empowered consumers. The CEAP also includes a Circular Cities and Regions Initiative, which focuses on support of local and regional stakeholders in the implementation of circular solutions. Furthermore, the updated EU **Bioeconomy Strategy** provides a strategic framework for shifting the economic resource base in Europe to a circular model that is grounded on renewable and bio-based materials. The **Green City Accord** recognises the pivotal role of the circular economy in order to step up implementation of EU environmental policy among European cities.

The attached declaration aims to support and intensify efforts to promote greater circularity, more sustainable production and consumption, and improved management of our finite resources in accordance with the aforementioned frameworks. Furthermore, the commitments of signatories to the declaration will support their implementation of European policy, including the CEAP.

¹ Circular Economy in Cities Project Guide, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019
ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/CE-in-Cities-Project-Guide_Mar19



Vision for a circular city

The circular economy requires an integrated and systemic transition from the linear ‘take-make-dispose’ model to circular closed-loop systems, especially in key value chains such as electronics and ICT, batteries and vehicles, packaging, plastics, textiles, construction and buildings, and food.²

A circular city is one that promotes the transition from a linear to a circular economy in an integrated way across all its functions in collaboration with citizens, businesses and the research community. This means in practice fostering business models and economic behaviour which decouple resource use from economic activity by maintaining the value and utility of products, components, materials and nutrients for as long as possible in order to close material loops and minimise harmful resource use and waste generation. Through this transition, cities seek to improve human wellbeing, reduce emissions, protect and enhance biodiversity, and promote social justice, in line with the sustainable development goals.

A city of circular integration: where circular principles are applied across all city functions.

- Circular principles are integrated horizontally across all local government departments and coordinated centrally with support from the political leadership.
- Leading by example, local governments promote greater citizen awareness and capacity building opportunities to incite behavioural change from various stakeholder groups, including local businesses and civil society.
- The city monitors and reports on progress towards implementation to measure the impact of actions taken and adapt strategies where necessary.
- The city undertakes advocacy work beyond city borders, at regional, national and EU level, to push for regulatory framework conditions that enable speeding up the circular transition and that foster multi-level collaboration.

A city that generates and retains value: where innovative design and production methods, business models and consumption behaviour prioritise maintaining the value and utility of assets.

- The promotion of the “sharing economy” encourages a shift from product ownership to using goods through services.
- Repair, reuse and remanufacturing schemes create business opportunities, especially for social economy actors, generating more inclusive local jobs.
- Product-as-a-service models extend producer responsibility while decreasing demand for raw material extraction.
- Shorter, smarter supply chains in key sectors such as food create a more resilient local economy.
- Food is regeneratively (and locally, if appropriate) cultivated in agricultural systems that replenish the local ecosystem.

² EU Circular Economy Action Plan, 2020

ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan


- 
- New products, components and materials are designed and manufactured considering their entire lifecycle to be harm-free and waste-free, from production through end of use.
 - Public procurers, local businesses and citizens choose durable, modular, accessible, reusable and repairable products with extended lifetimes and reduced environmental footprints.
 - Adapted consumer behaviour extends the lifetime and intensifies the use of existing products and infrastructure.
 - Industrial symbiosis in local production processes leads to innovation and reduced dependency on imported raw material supply by making the most of by-products.
 - Infrastructure and buildings are designed to be multifunctional, adaptable and easy to maintain, repair and repurpose with long lifetimes and high value recovery.
 - Digitalisation enables sustainable asset management, with material banks to keep track of components and their composition in order to facilitate their transition to other uses.
 - Material flows and stocks are tracked and managed efficiently to minimise losses and optimise co-benefits between producers and consumers of secondary materials.
-

A city of closed loops: where products and materials are kept in use, while waste and harmful resource use is minimised.

- High-quality secondary materials represent a growing portion of local material demand.
 - Energy and natural resources are renewably sourced and used with care.
 - At end of use, local resource management systems separate, collect and redistribute products, components and materials to prepare for reuse, remanufacturing or recycling.
 - These systems see to it that closed loops are as 'small' as possible within the local community, prioritising short value chains and respecting the waste hierarchy.
 - Likewise, nutrients from bio-waste are retained locally as a replenishing resource.
 - Digital tools are harnessed for data-driven planning processes that optimise logistics for management and valorisation of secondary materials.
-

A liveable city: of low-emissions, regenerated natural systems and improved human health and wellbeing.

- The local retention of nutrients and the protection of biodiversity promote the regeneration of natural systems, which also depend on and benefit from clean water and air.
- Embodied carbon of city infrastructure is minimised, while nature-based solutions are integrated for improved resilience.
- With a circular perspective embedded in urban planning and decision-making, the movement of people and goods around mixed-use urban areas is low-emission, favouring public transport, cycling and walking to avoid pollution and congestion.

- 
- Citizens' wellbeing benefits from improved environmental quality and equitable access to ecosystem services for present and future generations.
 - Social integration is enhanced through increased sharing of goods and spaces as well as greater proximity between places to live, work and play.
 - Citizens are empowered consumers of goods and services, informed of the environmental footprint of their consumption and involved in co-creation of circular solutions.

Levers for local governments to accelerate the circular transition

Local governments should leverage their role as promoter, facilitator and enabler to implement circularity using the levers available to them to the extent possible, including:

- 1 VISION** – They can provide a common vision through roadmaps or strategies that give direction to the local circular transition and align initiatives.
- 2 ENGAGEMENT** – Local governments have a privileged role as facilitator between public, private and civic leaders, which can be used to convene and partner with others in co-creation of the shared system change, raise awareness of circular opportunities through communication campaigns and lead capacity building to train and advise other local actors.
- 3 URBAN MANAGEMENT** – Under the mandate of urban management, cities can embed circularity in urban planning, infrastructure and asset management, and can also strategically leverage their own public procurement.
- 4 ECONOMIC INCENTIVES** – To accelerate implementation of the circular economy, local governments should use economic incentives including financial support such as grants, subsidies, or public-private partnerships to encourage circular innovation. They can also consider fiscal measures to incentivise behaviour change, driving the market towards circularity.
- 5 REGULATION** – Legislation and regulation should embed in policy the political commitment and enabling conditions for a fully circular economy. Cities should inform and work with national and international institutions to support this effort.³

³ Circular Economy in Cities Policy Levers, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019
ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/assets/downloads/CE-in-Cities_Policy-Levers_Mar19

Resources available for cities

- Circular Flanders – **Circular City Governance Guide**
- Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP) – **Circular Economy Guidebook for Cities**
- Committee of the Regions – **Studies**
- European Investment Bank (EIB) – **The 15 Circular Steps for Cities**
- Ellen MacArthur Foundation – **Circular Economy for Cities Programme**
- European Union – Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform
- ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability – Circular Cities Platform circularcities.eu
- OECD – **Programme on the Circular Economy in Cities and Regions**
- UN Environment Programme (UNEP) – buildingcircularity.org and resourceefficientcities.org
- The Urban Agenda – **Partnership on Circular Economy, Circular City Funding Guide**

Financing & Advisory support

- European Investment Advisory Hub (EIAH) – the urban investment advisory platform
- **EIB Innovation Finance Advisory**

Contact

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability – European Secretariat

Leopoldring 3, 79098 Freiburg, Germany

+49 761 368 92-0

info@circularcitiesdeclaration.eu

Partners



Appendix I: Unpacking the Commitments of the European Circular Cities Declaration – Measures, outcomes and resources

The following table is meant to orient and inspire action towards the commitments.

The table will be updated – please contact info@circularcitiesdeclaration.eu to recommend relevant resources.

Commitments	Example measures	Desired outcome	Example indicators Measuring progress towards commitment	Resources
1. Establish a circular transition roadmap or strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Create a Circular City strategy → Publish an action plan to improve circularity in key sectors → Establish an advisory group or task force across departments to integrate circularity into sustainable development efforts. 	Common direction of travel and political commitment to the local circular transition. Efforts and initiatives are aligned and complementary.	Existence of city-wide strategy on CE with measurable objectives translated into targeted actions	<p>Examples of city CE strategies: Circular Amsterdam, Brussels, Helsinki, Paris, LWARB</p> <p>15 Circular Steps for Cities (EIB)</p> <p>The Circular Economy in Valladolid, Spain (OECD)</p> <p>The Circular Economy in Groningen, Netherlands (OECD)</p> <p>The Circular Economy in Umea, Sweden (OECD)</p>
2. Raise awareness of circular economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Awareness campaign in public places/ public services → Internal workshops to integrate CE across local govt. departments. → Promote use of Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) and Ecolabels, or development of labels for reparability and expected lifetime of products to empower consumers to choose circular. 	Systemic behaviour change and empowered consumers. Buy-in of local and regional actors.	Number (and quality) of information, education and awareness campaigns about circular economy. Increased awareness/involvement in population about CE. Improved dissemination of information to the public	Be circular-Be Brussels Campaign (City of Brussels)

Commitments	Example measures	Desired outcome	Example indicators Measuring progress towards commitment	Resources
3. Engage local stakeholders to promote circular businesses and initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Host local/ regional circular economy conferences or festivals → Create forums or channels of encounter for regional CE actors → Host innovative design competitions using secondary materials → Build market confidence with Environmental Technology Verification (ETV) 	<p>Symbiotic local market of secondary materials, growth of social, repair and sharing economy. Circular transition is fit to context through inclusive initiatives.</p>	<p>New methods and technologies for stakeholder involvement. New stakeholder structures for improved circularity established. New CE related skills and training courses/events. Stakeholder groups involved</p>	<p>Circular Business Model Innovation (CSCP)</p> <p>Circular City Funding Guide (EIB)</p> <p>Circular Jobs Initiative (Circle Economy)</p> <p>Roundtable on the Circular Economy in Cities and Regions (OECD)</p>
4. Embed circularity in urban planning, infrastructure and asset management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Use LCA tools to consider lifecycle impacts of asset management and infrastructure investment → Optimise occupancy of existing public assets through shared-use schemes and adaptive reuse → Design for disassembly → Include logistics for CE activities in land-use and mobility plans → Develop data systems to track materials and products (buildings as material banks) 	<p>Integration of circular principles in the built environment. Development of necessary infrastructures to close material loops.</p>	<p>Number (and kind) of decision support mechanisms taking into account circularity principles (e.g. reuse is better than recycling etc.). Number of dedicated staff in urban planning, ensuring CE principles. Increased average lifetimes of buildings and infrastructure. Reuse- and recycling rate of CDW. New guidelines for circular procurement</p>	<p>Roadmap to Circular Land Tendering (City of Amsterdam)</p> <p>Circular Economy in Cities: Buildings Factsheet (Ellen MacArthur Foundation)</p> <p>Circular Economy in the Built Environment (Ellen MacArthur Foundation and ARUP)</p>

Commitments	Example measures	Desired outcome	Example indicators Measuring progress towards commitment	Resources
5. Leverage circular public procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Include circularity in the org.'s procurement strategy → Use circular criteria in tenders 	Local government purchase of goods and services serves to accelerate the local circular transition.	Share of public procurement procedures above EU thresholds in number and value that include environmental considerations. New/higher circularity requirements in procurement. Value/number of procurement with circularity requirements	Public procurement for a circular economy (European Commission)
6. Apply economic incentives and seek out fiscal measures to encourage circular economic and social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → 'Pay-as-you-throw' schemes → Deposit and refund schemes (DRS) → Value chain collaboration incentives 	Businesses and citizens shift towards increasingly circular goods and services.	Number of economic incentives or fiscal measures in place to promote CE. Reduced number of subsidies hindering circularity. New circular economy business models/cases	EIB Advisory Hub

Commitments	Example measures	Desired outcome	Example indicators Measuring progress towards commitment	Resources
7. Foster an enabling regulatory framework to encourage secondary material markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → End-of-waste concept through environmental permitting → Extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes → Adherence to EU waste, water, raw material and bio-economy regulations 	Innovative valorisation and use of secondary materials is allowed and encouraged.	Value/number of public investment in improved waste management and treatment. Establishment of material databanks. Establishment of material demand management tools. New sustainability certificates	EU Circular Economy Action Plan (European Commission)
8. Collaborate with national governments and EU institutions to establish an appropriate policy and regulatory framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Seek out and participate in multilevel fora to push CE as an agenda and align complementary initiatives → Advocate for CE policies at higher political levels and voice barriers and needs to parties with the power to affect change. 	Multi-level governance strengthens efforts at all scales, and coherent leadership accelerates the transition.	Number (and kind) of established collaboration mechanisms on CE (e.g. EU Urban Agenda, CoR ENVE, EESC CE platform, CCI). Better utilization of inputs from stakeholders	Circular City Governance Guide (Urban Agenda) Circular Economy Policy Recommendations (CSCP)

Commitments	Example measures	Desired outcome	Example indicators Measuring progress towards commitment	Resources
9. Monitor the impacts of circular economy activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Conduct a circularity audit to identify hotspots → Regularly review and revise CE actions based on performance → Establish a 'City Dashboard' to combine, analyse and visualise data on material flows and socio-economic indicators; New sustainability certificates 	Measure what actions have greatest positive impact and transformative potential to dynamically adapt accordingly.	Local CE monitoring framework in use. Number (and quality) of projects engaged in, supporting the development and/or testing of such frameworks	Circular City monitoring framework (CityLoops) OECD Scoreboard on the Governance of the Circular Economy Amsterdam Circular Monitor Urban Metabolism Guide (UrbanWINS)
10. Report on progress towards the above commitments to ICLEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Communicate to ICLEI once per year after signing the Declaration, on activities contributing to the above commitments or CE in general → Profiles and news highlights on the Circular Cities Declaration Website feature leading examples 	Signees are held accountable for their commitments. The community of cities can exchange on initiatives and approaches to inspire and amplify their efforts.	Timely completion of annual reporting template	Circular Cities Declaration website www.circularcitiesdeclaration.eu