POLICY ROADMAP

CCC Policy Roadmap

Integrating the cultural and creative sectors into circular transition policy

Prepared by Alexander Forrest & Mary Teehan of Circular Intelligence for the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture. The Creative Circular Cities project is co-funded by the European Union through the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme.

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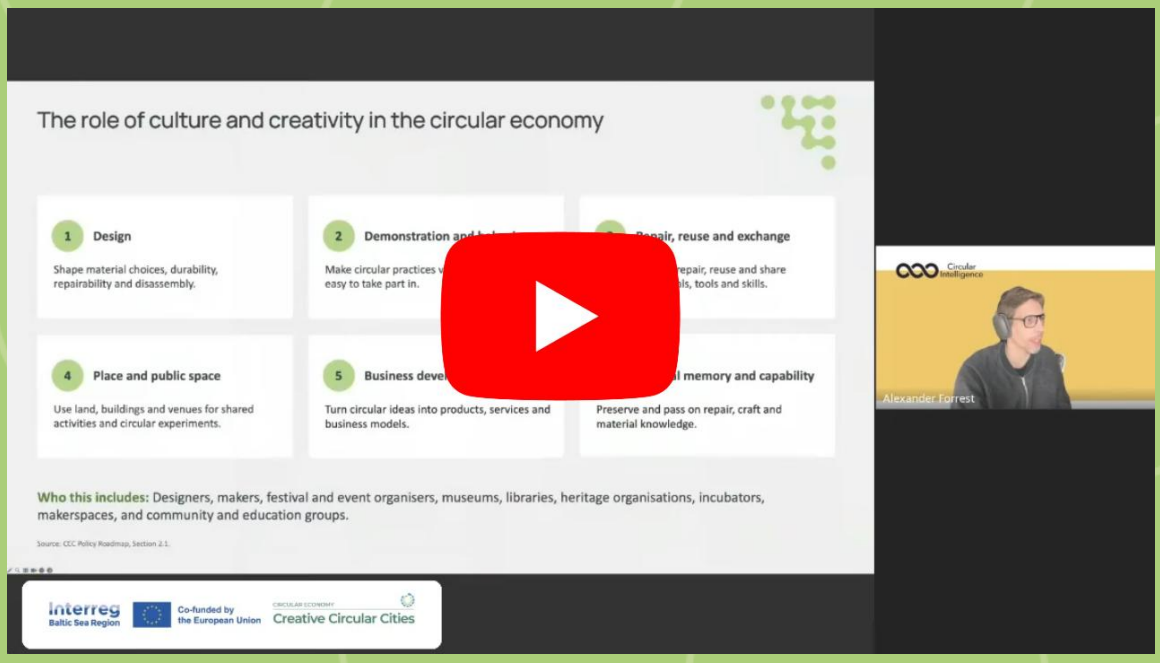
Interreg Baltic Sea Region

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CIRCULAR ECONOMY
Creative Circular Cities

Webinar: CCC Policy Roadmap walkthrough

This webinar recording offers a guided introduction to the CCC Policy Roadmap, with Alexander Forrest and Mary Teehan of Circular Intelligence presenting its key findings and recommendations. Click on the icon to watch the video on Youtube.



Imprint

- Project: Creative Circular Cities (CCC), Interreg Baltic Sea Region, 2023 to 2026, fourteen partners, lead partner the Danish Cultural Institute; pilot cities Aarhus, Gdynia, Kiel, Riga, Tallinn and Turku.[47, 78]
- Deliverable: the project's policy roadmap. Contract name: CCC Policy Roadmap for rolling out CCSI-driven local circular transition in the Baltic Sea Region. The executive summary is published separately.
- Prepared by: Circular Intelligence, Alexander Forrest and Mary Teehan. Commissioned by the Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture.
- Co-funding statement and programme disclaimer: the Interreg Baltic Sea Region standard text and logo, to be inserted from the programme's guidance.
- Evidence: statements of policy status describe the position at the evidence cut-off date, 21 September 2026. Raised numbers at the end of a paragraph refer to the references in Annex D, numbered 1 to 87 in one sequence. The executive summary carries no reference numbers; the source of every figure in it is given in the body.
- Attribution: consultation contributors are identified by role and country; no individual is named. Institutions' written positions are attributed to the institution.

Abbreviations

BSR Baltic Sea Region; CCC Creative Circular Cities; CCSI cultural and creative sectors and industries; CE circular economy; CMUR circular material use rate; EPR extended producer responsibility; ESPR Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation; EU European Union.

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Executive summary

The central finding. Cultural and creative organisations are often responsible for igniting circular economy work in cities. This was also evident in the pilot cities of this roadmap. The work done in these sectors is not not being measured or communicated in a way that would sustain it once the project funding ends. None of the eight national circular economy strategies, roadmaps and action plans reviewed for this roadmap names the cultural and creative sectors, and the EU's monitoring framework has no indicator for what they contribute. The six recommendations set out what has been seen to work when strategies, funding and reporting take this work into account, with 2030 as the year by which the relevant EU rules apply.

Context. Creative Circular Cities (CCC) is co-funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme and was implemented from 2023 to 2026 by fourteen partners under the lead of the Danish Cultural Institute, with pilot cities in Aarhus, Gdynia, Kiel, Riga, Tallinn and Turku. This Policy Roadmap is the project's policy deliverable: a reference framework for national, regional and local decision-makers to integrate approaches rooted in culture and creativity into circular transition strategies. It is not binding on any party. It rests on a desk study of 36 policy instruments, a partner survey, an external survey with 19 responses from eight countries, interviews with five city teams and a consultation held in 2026. The method and its limits are in Section 1.3, and the source of every figure in this summary is listed in Annex D.

Findings.

- The pilots counted their results: more than 750 participants at the 2025 Repair and Upcycling Festival in Kiel, and 496 participations in an incubation programme for creative and maker businesses in Tallinn.
- Participants in the consultation and respondents to both surveys reported that work combining culture and circularity fits neither cultural funding nor circular economy, innovation and business funding, and that the services it produces depend on project funding or volunteers.
- Participants in Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Poland reported that coordination between culture departments and the departments tasked with circularity rests on individual officers and can be disrupted by changes of staff or administration.
- Participants in Estonia, Germany and Latvia reported that national plans expect cities and other municipalities to carry circular tasks and often do not fund them.

Conclusions. The results in the pilot cities were achieved with project funding, and the project ends in 2026. Whether the work continues depends on decisions taken elsewhere, in strategies, funding programmes, city budgets and official reporting. The six recommendations address these decisions. The roadmap creates no new instrument and no monitoring body; follow-up could run through the reporting that already exists (Section 3.2).

Recommendations. Each of the six is written to be read on its own, with its measure, target groups, rationale, good practices, 2030 direction, initial steps and indicators.

1. Include the cultural and creative sectors in circular economy strategies.
2. Fund culture-led circular work from both cultural and circular economy programmes.
3. Keep coordination between departments going through changes of staff and administration.
4. Give repair, reuse and business support services a lasting home and budget.
5. Ensure that the circular tasks national plans assign to cities and other municipalities are funded and staffed.
6. Measure the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to the circular economy and include it in official reporting and budget decisions.

Where each organisation can start. A ministry revising a national circular economy plan can start with Recommendations 1 and 5, a city administration with Recommendations 3 and 4, a funding body with Recommendation 2, and a cultural or creative organisation with Sections 2.1 and 3.2.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Creative Circular Cities (CCC) is a transnational project co-funded by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme, implemented from 2023 to 2026 by a consortium of fourteen partners under the lead of the Danish Cultural Institute, with six pilot cities: Aarhus, Gdynia, Kiel, Riga, Tallinn and Turku. The project places culture and creativity at the core of the circular economy transition, bringing together local authorities, business support organisations and NGOs to enable the cultural and creative sectors and industries (CCSI) to drive circularity, promote circular lifestyles and support municipalities in systemic circular transitions. Circular economy policies in the region remain largely sector-specific, and the cross-cutting potential of CCSI-driven circular transition is underexplored. For this roadmap the national circular economy strategies, roadmaps and action plans of eight Baltic Sea Region countries were reviewed: the six project countries and, in addition, Lithuania and Sweden. None of the eight identifies the cultural and creative sectors as contributors to implementing the circular economy. The EU circular material use rate stood at 12.2 % in 2024 against a 2030 target of 22.4 %. This Policy Roadmap is the project's policy deliverable: a reference framework for national, regional and local decision-makers to integrate approaches rooted in culture and creativity into circular transition strategies.[20, 46 to 48, 78]

1.2 Purpose and scope

The purpose of this roadmap is fourfold.

1. It describes the potential and opportunities of circular transition driven by the cultural and creative sectors at local level.
2. It sets out the support that local stakeholders need from government and the support that government can provide.
3. It builds on three sources: the experience of the six pilot cities, a survey of national responsibilities and support schemes in the Baltic Sea Region, and a consultation with policymakers and stakeholders in the six countries.[23 to 47]
4. It provides a reference framework for future policy support actions and for dialogue between local stakeholders and government.[47]

The recommendations are written for use beyond the six cities and beyond the region, with 2030 as the horizon, the year by which the relevant EU rules apply. The target groups are:[15 to 19]

- national ministries and agencies;
- city administrations;
- funding bodies and producer responsibility organisations, the operators that collect and spend producers' fees under extended producer responsibility schemes;



- the cultural and creative organisations, business support organisations and networks that carry out circular activity.

The roadmap is not binding on any party. Where to start:

- a ministry revising a national circular economy plan: Recommendations 1 and 5, using the six areas of activity in Section 2.1 as the wording for the sectors' role;
- a city, with the decision it already faces: a strategy being renewed, Recommendation 1; a funding call under revision, Recommendation 2; a question no single department can settle, Recommendation 3; a service about to lose its funding, Recommendation 4; a budget process, Recommendation 6;
- a funding agency or producer responsibility organisation: Recommendation 2;
- a cultural or creative organisation: Section 2.1 and the profiles in Annex A to describe its work using the six areas of activity, and the policy windows in Section 3.2 to find the consultation to enter.

Two terms carry a specific meaning here. They are adapted from the project's CCC Starter Kit (creativecircularcities.com) and from the definition used by the European Union's Creative Europe programme. The cultural and creative sectors and industries (the project's CCSI, written out in this document) are visual and performing arts, design, media and advertising; heritage organisations, museums, libraries, events and festivals; and the community practice, education and creative businesses that connect them. Circular economy means keeping the value of products, materials and resources in use for as long as possible and wasting as little as possible: sharing, leasing, reuse, repair, refurbishment, recycling, rethinking and redesigning.

1.3 Methodology

The roadmap was developed between March and October 2026 in five phases. The mapping phase was a desk study, completed in June 2026. It reviewed 36 policy instruments at EU, macro-regional, national and municipal level, among them the national circular economy strategies, roadmaps and action plans of the eight countries. Each instrument was read for the responsibilities it assigns, the support schemes it offers and the governance conditions it sets for circular transition driven by the cultural and creative sectors. The results are held in a comparative policy matrix, which is the source for the finding that none of the eight national documents names the sectors, and for Annex B. In the analysis phase, the findings were organised into three clusters: policy gaps, cross-sectoral challenges and governance barriers. In the consultation phase, a multi-level consultation was carried out:[46]

- an internal partner survey with ten responses;[23]
- an external stakeholder survey with 19 complete responses from eight countries;[24]
- structured interviews with five city teams in May 2026;[25 to 29]
- online focus groups in Turku, Tallinn and Gdynia and one-to-one consultations with representatives of government, municipal administration, procurement, academia, business, civil society and creative practice in August 2026;[31 to 41]



- expert interviews;[30, 42]
- written answers from one national culture ministry, one national climate ministry and one city circular economy department in September 2026.[43, 84]

In the review phase, the draft roadmap was circulated to project partners, advisors and external contributors (41 copies, 17 substantive replies) and reviewed by the project coordinators. Partners' corrections of facts concerning their own city are treated as confirmations; review comments are not used as evidence for policy findings.[44, 45]

The consultation was designed for depth rather than statistical representation. Samples are small and self-selected, and recruitment coincided with the summer period. No funding agency or producer responsibility organisation took part. Evidence for Denmark is drawn from the public record, one partner survey response and the partner's published case study. Session records are structured notes, not transcripts. Findings are reported as patterns only where they recur across more than one source or context; a finding based on a single contribution is identified as such. Quantitative data from the cities retain the units used by their sources and are not aggregated across cities or converted into tonnes or emissions. Contributors are identified by role and country and no individual is named; quotations from consultation sessions are reproduced only where the speaker has confirmed the wording.[86]



2 Current role of the cultural and creative sectors in the circular economy

2.1 The contribution of the cultural and creative sectors: design-led solutions and cultural change

The cultural and creative sectors have long been among the first to practise what circular economy policy now asks for: repair, reuse, redesign and the care of places and materials. That contribution has historically been under-recognised. None of the eight national circular economy strategies, roadmaps and action plans reviewed for this roadmap names the sectors. The EU's circular economy monitoring framework carries no indicator that captures their contribution, and its headline measure, the circular material use rate, counts recycled material only, so that design, repair and reuse do not appear in it. Four EU instruments that create demand for design, repair, reuse and demonstration work by 2030, the Waste Framework Directive, the Right to Repair Directive, the packaging regulation and the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, name none of the sectors that supply it. The published scope of the Circular Economy Act due before the end of 2026 does not name them either, and the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region places culture and the circular economy in separate priority areas. At national level, the Estonian Ministry of Culture stated in writing that it is not part of the circular economy policy process; in Turku, the creative sector was absent from the working group for the city's climate plan until the project argued for its inclusion.[15 to 21, 27, 43, 44, 46, 48, 50 to 52]

In the six pilot cities the circular work was visible throughout the project. Designers worked with the City of Gdynia on the reuse of bulky furniture. An incubator in Tallinn taught creative and maker businesses to build circular practice into a business plan. Cultural organisations in Kiel ran repair and upcycling festivals for hundreds of residents. In Riga a library garden was built from reused materials. In Turku a forum run by the city brought the culture side and the climate and circular economy side of the administration to the same table every two to three months. These are the sectors as defined in 1.2: designers and makers, festivals and events, museums, libraries and heritage organisations, incubators and makerspaces, and the community and educational organisations that connect them. The contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to the circular economy can be described in six areas of activity.[1 to 5, 44, 63, 64, 66, 67]

1. Design. Determines durability, repairability, disassembly, material choice and service models before procurement or production.
2. Demonstration and behaviour. Makes unfamiliar practices visible, attractive and socially usable.
3. Repair, reuse and exchange. Provides trusted local channels for products, materials, tools and skills.
4. Place and public space. Activates vacant land, buildings and venues as test beds and shared infrastructure.



5. Business development. Translates circular principles into viable offers, services and business plans.
6. Cultural memory and capability. Retains and transfers repair, craft and material knowledge.

According to the European Commission, up to 80 % of a product's environmental impact is determined at the design stage.[54]

The six areas are defined broadly: an organisation that repairs, lends, designs, hosts or teaches contributes in one of them, whether or not it calls that work circular. In Tallinn, an incubation programme of five modules translated circular economy guidance into business planning for creative and maker businesses, with 496 participations across 17 sessions. A public purchasing group formed by the six cities used pre-commercial procurement to fund the design of solutions, with design completed by April 2026 and prototype testing running to September 2026. In Kiel, a repair and upcycling festival held on 10 May 2025 brought together more than 750 participants and over 30 workshops in support of the objectives of the city's Zero Waste strategy, and was repeated in 2026.[2, 4, 53, 63, 66, 67]

The barriers the cultural and creative sectors met were recorded in the partner survey and the external survey:[23, 24]

- weak collaboration across sectors (9 of 19 external respondents; 6 of 9 internal respondents, the joint top barrier with funding);
- limited funding or investment (8 of 19 external respondents; 6 of 9 internal respondents);
- limited evidence or tested models (8 of 19 external respondents);
- a shortage of skills (7 of 19 external respondents);
- difficulty in showing the value of the work (6 of 19 external respondents);
- lack of policy coordination (5 of 19 external respondents) and weak coordination between local and national level (3 of 9 internal respondents).

In the consultation, contributors named four difficulties that some pilots encountered:[31 to 41]

- the rules were unclear;
- the costs were not covered by the funding;
- the building or space used for the work was no longer available;
- the responsible municipal position had no staff time.

Two limitations apply. First, the cultural and creative sectors' own material flows are small compared with construction or industry; their contribution lies earlier in the chain, in design decisions taken before materials are purchased, in the procurement they influence, and in whether circular services are used. Second, most of the work in the six areas already belongs to an existing policy field: waste, procurement, business support or social economy. The roadmap therefore proposes no new structure for the cultural sector. It proposes that the existing fields recognise and fund this work, under the same rules that apply to any other provider.

Five conditions need to be met for circular policy to be adopted in practice; the recommendations that follow take them into account.

1. Convenience. The circular option is as convenient as the linear one.
2. Clarity. Policy states which requirements are mandatory and which are voluntary.
3. Cost. Policy does not transfer unfunded costs to residents and small organisations, and where costs rise it states the value and who pays.
4. Infrastructure and procurement. Infrastructure, procurement and default settings carry part of the change, so that behaviour does not depend on persuasion alone.
5. Coherence between policies. A sector recognised in one policy field is recognised, fundable and counted in the others, and no project or person has to bridge them.

2.2 Good practices in the pilot cities

Each pilot city ran a co-creation forum and two local pilots under the same project mandate, and each did so in its own way. The co-creation forum brought creative professionals, municipal staff, non-governmental organisations and circular economy experts together for discussion and exchange. One pilot addressed circular business for creative professionals, the other the circular lifestyles of residents. The examples below were selected from more; the full profiles are in Annex A.[47]

Turku, Finland. A cross-department co-creation forum, run by the City of Turku, Humak University of Applied Sciences and Valonia, an expert organisation for sustainable development, every two to three months with about 15 participants, thirteen sessions between September 2024 and October 2026; and a creative incubator whose participants' self-assessed knowledge ("very high" and "high" answers) rose from 48 to 72 % between January and April 2025.[1, 44]

Tallinn, Estonia. An incubation programme for creative and maker businesses in five modules, with 496 participations across 17 sessions; a 156 m² circular economy exhibition, The Circular Economy in Practice; and the Design meets Science series of 14 seminars with about 780 attendees.[2, 63]

Riga, Latvia. A library garden in Bolderāja built with reused materials, the pilot for citizen engagement; the first national Circular Economy Forum, in 2025, the pilot for business, with about 350 participants, more than 100 speakers and 32 sessions; and the Riga Circular Economy Strategy 2040, a deliverable of the project, which supported the city's Circular Economy Action Plan 2030, approved by the City Council in August 2026.[3, 64, 65, 85]

Kiel, Germany. Two repair and upcycling festivals, on 10 May 2025 with more than 750 participants and over 30 workshops and in 2026 with more than 600 participants and over 25 workshops, organised by Anscharcampus and the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein with Zero Waste Kiel e.V. within the framework of the city's Zero Waste strategy; a circular design journey with Muthesius University and the Circular Design Hub Hamburg; and an open letter on the right to repair signed by more than ten organisations in October 2025.[4, 66, 67, 79 to 83]

Gdynia, Poland. A bulky waste reuse solution developed and tested with the city, starting with furniture: 34 pieces collected in the 2025 pilot, two exhibitions shown to 13,287 visitors at Gdynia Design Days 2026, and a residents' platform and booklet due in September 2026.[5, 44]

Aarhus, Denmark. Circular economy measures carried inside the city's Climate Plan 2025 to 2030, with about DKK 300 million allocated to the climate effort; and Lifestyle Hub Aarhus, run by the Lifestyle and Design Cluster, where the project's exhibitions, network meetings and a circular fashion collection made with design students took place.[6, 68, 69, 86]

2.3 Good practices in other countries

Five practices from outside the project each show a policy tool that one of the recommendations relies on. They support Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. Recommendation 3 rests on the pilot cities' own evidence alone.

The Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium, names the cultural and creative industries a priority sector in its Shifting Economy strategy and attaches finance, business support and coordination measures to that status. The practice shows recognition tied to policy tools and money (Recommendations 1 and 2).[73]

At Roskilde Festival, Denmark, more than 9,500 people chose the camping equipment rental option in 2025; the festival reported more than 1,700 tonnes of waste at a 22 % recycling rate, against its published 2028 targets of 1,000 tonnes and 65 %. The practice shows a cultural event used as a measured test bed (Recommendations 1 and 6).[72]

In Paris, France, La Réserve des Arts had 9,080 member organisations and individual creators, collected 512 tonnes of material in 2025 and handles over 600 tonnes a year through the wider Île-de-France platform it operates. The practice shows sector-specific reuse infrastructure at scale (Recommendations 2 and 4).[71]

In Malmö, Sweden, reused furniture rose from 8.6 % of the value of the city's office furniture purchases in 2019 to 31.6 % in 2025; school administrations and internal reuse are excluded from the figure. The practice shows reuse written into procurement and counted in the city's own monitoring (Recommendations 4 and 6).[70]

In Rotterdam, the Netherlands, BlueCity reports 55 or more circular entrepreneurs in a repurposed 12,000 m² swimming pool and more than ten years of operation; Rotterdam Partners reports about 70 programmes a year with 200 companies participating. The practice shows long-term premises and programmes for circular entrepreneurship (Recommendation 4). The figures show scale, not whether public funding caused the results; one of this roadmap's authors previously delivered programmes at BlueCity, and only published sources are used.[74, 75]

3 Conclusions and policy recommendations

3.1 Policy recommendations

This chapter sets out six policy recommendations. The numbering is for reference only; an organisation starts with the decision it already faces. The recommendations are built around the steps that the EU's circular economy rules require by 2030, as those rules are transposed into national law and put into action over the coming years; the rules and their dates are listed in Section 3.2, and the national plans and targets of the eight countries are in Annex B. Each recommendation is written to be read on its own and can be taken out of the document. They rest on the review of 36 policy instruments, the partner survey and the external survey, the interviews with five city teams and the consultation held in 2026. Each recommendation has the same structure:[7 to 19, 23 to 47]

- recommended measure;
- target groups;
- rationale;
- good practices;
- 2030 direction;
- initial steps;
- indicators.

Recommendation 1. Include the cultural and creative sectors in circular economy strategies

Recommended measure. Circular economy policies should name the cultural and creative sectors and describe their contribution using the six areas of activity set out in Chapter 2: design; demonstration and behaviour; repair, reuse and exchange; place and public space; business development; cultural memory and capability. Funding criteria, public purchasing and progress measures should reflect that recognition.[44]

Target groups.

- National ministries for environment or climate, economy and culture, which own the national strategies.
- Regional authorities, which own regional strategies and programmes.
- City strategy units, which own the municipal plans.
- Sector organisations and municipal associations, which supply the evidence and the wording.

Rationale. None of the eight national circular economy strategies, roadmaps and action plans of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden names the cultural and creative sectors. The EU's circular economy monitoring framework has no indicator for their contribution. Several of the documents that could name the cultural and creative sectors are being



written or revised now. At EU level, the Circular Economy Act is due before the end of 2026. At macro-regional level, the action plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is under review in 2026. At national level, Estonia's Ministry of Climate has begun preparing the National Waste Plan 2029+ as part of its new national circular economy plan, and has stated that this process is an opportunity to consider measures for engaging the cultural and creative sectors. The full list of policy windows is in Section 3.2.[11, 15, 20, 21, 46, 50 to 52, 84]

Germany and Lithuania adopted their documents in 2024 and 2023; Denmark, Finland and Sweden have plans in force with no revision date on record. Partners reported in the partner survey that circular strategies are informed by waste management companies, environmental organisations and civic initiatives, and rarely by the creative sector. In Turku, the creative sector was absent from the working group of the city's climate plan until the city's project team argued for its inclusion. The City of Tallinn's circular economy department cautioned against tying the sectors closely to policy objectives or performance indicators. In its view the question is whether policy should steer the work of the creative sectors or create the conditions in which they can take up circular themes if they choose, and it favours the second.[7 to 10, 13, 23, 27, 44, 84]

Good practices.

- Turku, Finland: the city's Climate Plan, adopted in 2026, names the creative industries and the arts.[44, 62]
- Kiel, Germany: the city's funding guideline for creative centres refers to the goals of its Zero Waste strategy.[44]
- Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium: Shifting Economy, the region's economic transition strategy, names the cultural and creative industries a priority sector and attaches finance, business support and coordination measures to it.[73]

2030 direction. By 2030, participating countries, regions and cities have adopted policies or plans that set out the cultural and creative sectors' role in the circular economy.

Initial steps. A first milestone could be one strategy, plan or programme under revision that carries wording on what the cultural and creative sectors do, with a local example and a measurable result, adopted or formally submitted for the next update, with an owner who follows it up. Two practical routes exist:

- a seat for the sectors in the plan's working group, as in Turku;[27, 44]
- cultural funding linked to circular economy goals, as in Kiel.[44]

Indicators.

- The number of national, regional and city strategies, plans and programmes that name the cultural and creative sectors and assign a responsible organisation.
- The number of proposals submitted to name the cultural and creative sectors in a strategy, plan or programme, and the share adopted.

- The number of funding calls, procurement documents and monitoring frameworks that cite the strategy's reference to the cultural and creative sectors.

> *"If cultural and creative sectors are expected to contribute to circularity goals, it is important to involve the ministry already during the drafting phase." (a national culture ministry, Estonia)*[43]
>
> *"It's not only your own circularity. More important is the handprint: helping others make their activities more effective." (a city culture officer, Finland, on the handprint, the positive effect an organisation has through what it helps others do)*[31]

Recommendation 2. Fund culture-led circular work from both cultural and circular economy programmes

Recommended measure. Cultural funding programmes should include circular outcomes in their award criteria and cover the costs that circular work carries: premises and capital costs for infrastructure, materials handling, insurance, compliance, staff and technical expertise, and training in design, community engagement and business skills. Circular economy, waste, innovation and business funding programmes should admit cultural and creative organisations under the same rules as any other applicant. Producer responsibility organisations should consider prevention, reuse and repair services among the uses of their fees.[17, 41]

Target groups.

- The managing authorities of EU programmes, which set eligibility for EU funds.
- National and regional funding agencies for culture, the circular economy, innovation and business, which write the calls.
- City grant owners and innovation agencies, which run the municipal programmes.
- Producer responsibility organisations, which collect and spend producers' fees.

Rationale. Participants in the consultation and respondents to both surveys reported that work combining culture and circularity fits neither cultural funding nor circular economy, innovation and business funding. Cultural calls often cannot pay for premises, materials handling, insurance, compliance or technical expertise; circular economy, waste, innovation and business calls may exclude cultural organisations or judge them by industrial criteria. An adviser at the Estonian Ministry of Culture, giving a personal view, proposed that eligibility follow the result an activity produces and not the sector in which the applicant is classified, which also avoids separate sector-based measures. The City of Tallinn's circular economy department asked which funding instruments carry the barrier, and noted that creative projects on circular themes in Estonia have been funded through several schemes.[23, 24, 31 to 41, 84]

Limited funding was named as a barrier by 8 of 19 respondents to the external survey and by 6 of 9 respondents to the partner survey, the partners' joint top barrier. In Estonia, the Ministry of Culture reports that environmentally responsible practice is a sub-criterion of limited weight in some of its



instruments and that no national instrument rewards circular outcomes in the sectors. No funding agency or producer responsibility organisation took part in the consultation.[23, 24, 43, 44]

Good practices.

- Tallinn, Estonia: the city's culture grants award points for sustainability.[32]
- Kiel, Germany: the city's funding guideline for creative centres refers to the goals of its Zero Waste strategy.[44]
- Brussels-Capital Region, Belgium: Shifting Economy, the region's economic transition strategy, attaches finance and business support measures to the cultural and creative industries as a priority sector.[73]

2030 direction. By 2030, in each participating country, at least one cultural funding programme has circular outcomes in its award criteria and at least one circular economy, innovation or business programme is open to cultural and creative organisations.

Initial steps. A first milestone could be one joint review of one cultural funding programme and one circular economy, innovation or business programme by the organisations that manage them, covering eligibility, award criteria and the costs each excludes. One call is then published with one of these changes:

- cultural and creative organisations made eligible for the circular economy, innovation or business call, or circular projects made eligible for the cultural call;
- circular outcomes made an award criterion, with enough weight to change which applications are funded;
- technical assistance offered to applicants;
- insurance, materials handling, premises and compliance costs made eligible costs.

Indicators.

- The number of cultural funding calls with circular outcomes in their award criteria.
- The number of circular economy, innovation or business calls open to cultural and creative organisations.
- The number of applications from cultural and creative organisations to those calls, and the share funded.
- The share of funded projects still operating two years after the grant ended, where the funder follows up.

> *"Estonia does not currently have cultural funding instruments that specifically reward circular economy outcomes in the way suggested by this roadmap." (a national culture ministry, Estonia)*[43]
>
> *"Money talks everywhere. When someone makes a decision, then it's followed." (a strategy lead, Finland)*[31]



Recommendation 3. Keep coordination between departments going through changes of staff and administration

Recommended measure. Public administrations should assign coordination between the culture and creative departments and the departments tasked with circularity (climate, environment, waste, procurement and economic development) to a job position, so that the task passes to whoever holds the position next. Three things should be in place:

- each department concerned names a responsible position and a deputy;
- decisions are documented;
- the task is anchored in an existing work programme, with the staff time to carry it out.[40, 44]

No new structure is required. In Turku, Tallinn and Gdynia an outside organisation, a university of applied sciences, a business incubator and a design centre, does the coordinating at present. Where that is the case, the arrangement should name that organisation as well as the city position.[1, 2, 5]

Target groups.

- National ministries responsible for circular economy planning, for the equivalent arrangement at national level.
- Metropolitan bodies, where they exist.
- City managers and ministry secretariats, which decide which existing positions carry the task.
- Heads of the departments concerned, which name the position and its deputy.

Rationale. Participants in the consultation in Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia and Poland reported that coordination between these departments rests on individual officers and can be disrupted by changes of staff or administration. Decisions that need more than one department, such as a funding rule, a procurement requirement or the future of a service, then wait until the next person has rebuilt the relationships. In Gdynia, a tested pilot lost its city sponsor after the local election. In Kiel, a city officer described five years of trying to involve the creative sector and universities in city processes without success. Staff capacity was the limit even where a strategy has a budget. In Estonia, cooperation between ministries runs person to person and resets when someone leaves. The City of Tallinn's circular economy department reported the same from inside a city administration: initiatives often depend on a project, or on one member of staff whose role and mandate include the work, and they slow down or stop when the project ends or that person moves.[25, 28, 31 to 41, 44, 84]

Weak coordination between culture and sustainability departments was the joint top barrier in the partner survey (6 of 9) and weak collaboration across sectors the top barrier in the external survey (9 of 19). In Turku, focus group participants said that cooperation stalls at the middle level of the administration and that nothing moves unless the department head backs it.[23, 24, 31]

Good practices.

- Turku, Finland: before project funding ended, the city assigned ownership of its cross-department co-creation forum to two service areas, Cultural Promotion and the Climate, Nature and Circular Economy team in Business and Economic Development Services.[1, 44]



- Gdynia, Gdańsk and Sopot, Poland: a network of about twenty cultural institutions holds together through a public commitment by their heads and monthly informal meetings.[38, 44]

No practice from outside the project is on record for this recommendation (Section 2.3).

2030 direction. By 2030, participating administrations run coordination between the departments concerned through job positions anchored in an adopted work programme, budget or statutory procedure, with the same arrangement at national level for tasks that sit there.

Initial steps. A first milestone could be one decision taken through the arrangement. The city manager's office or the ministry secretariat picks one task it can influence, such as the revision of a funding call, a circular procurement category or a funding proposal for a repair or reuse service. It assigns participation to positions and records the decision, the responsible position and the deadline in the work programme or decision register, so that the record survives a change of person.

Indicators.

- The number of decisions taken through the coordination arrangement, as recorded in the work programme or decision register.
- The share of those decisions with a responsible position, a deadline and a budget.
- The number of those decisions still being implemented after a change of staff or administration.
- Whether the coordination arrangement is still in operation one year after project funding ended; in Turku the first check is 2027.[44]

> *"Naming a responsible partner or partners to be in charge is essential." (a project partner, partner survey)*[23]
>
> *"If circular economy is to persist as a new form of economy, there must be concrete policies and safeguards in place to prevent … loss (of time, materials, knowledge and capacity)." (a climate educator, Poland)*[34, 44]

Recommendation 4. Give repair, reuse and business support services a lasting home and budget

Recommended measure. Cities and waste authorities should treat repair, reuse, exchange, guidance and business support services as local circular infrastructure and fund them in the way collection points and recycling facilities are funded now. The funding can be grants, service contracts, operating or storage space, earned income or a mix, and it goes to services that already exist rather than to new structures. The public budget should pay for the parts that the business model and the market often do not cover: the operating or storage space, the coordination and the guidance service.

Target groups.

- National and regional innovation and business support agencies, which fund business support.
- Metropolitan bodies, where they exist.
- Cities and waste authorities, which fund collection and recycling.



- The organisations that provide the services: incubators, creative centres, repair and reuse initiatives and zero waste associations.
- Universities and design schools, which supply the design and repair skills behind the services.

Rationale. In the pilot cities, participants in the consultation reported that repair, reuse, exchange, guidance and business support services depend on project funding or volunteers, and that when a project ends the service is at risk, with its skills and its space. Respondents to the external survey placed the sectors' greatest value in design for reuse and repair (11 of 19), public awareness and behaviour change (10) and place-based innovation (8). The City of Tallinn's circular economy department wrote that repair and reuse cannot rely only on voluntary initiatives or short-term projects and need stable organisation and long-term funding, like other public infrastructure.[24, 31 to 41, 84]

In Turku, circular services exist that nobody knows about, and a recycled-clothing project that began with about 50 people lost half of them once cost and salary entered. In Tallinn, businesses cannot tell which rules are compulsory, and no organisation answers that question for them. Tallinn focus group participants said that no system yet makes reuse easy or affordable. In Kiel, a project partner wrote in the partner survey that circular products and services need physical places and money for rent.[23, 26, 31, 32]

Good practices.

- Kiel, Germany: the city coordinates volunteers in a repair café and funds other infrastructure, and the partners expect the repair and upcycling festival to become annual.[40, 44]
- Gdynia, Poland: the bulky-waste reuse solution designed for creative professionals was taken up by residents, 34 pieces of furniture in 2025.[5, 44]
- Tallinn, Estonia: the city has turned several municipal waste collection sites into circular economy centres, where reuse and repair services, repair workshops, instructors, and training and advice for residents sit alongside waste collection, and it plans to extend the network. The Ministry of Climate reports that other municipalities, among them Viimsi, are developing similar centres.[84]
- Paris, France: La Réserve des Arts, a reuse platform for the creative sector, had 9,080 member organisations and individual creators and collected 512 tonnes of material in 2025.[71]
- Rotterdam, the Netherlands: BlueCity, a circular business hub in a repurposed 12,000 m² swimming pool, reports 55 or more circular entrepreneurs and more than ten years of operation, and runs about 70 programmes a year with 200 companies participating.[74, 75]

2030 direction. By 2030, at least one repair, reuse, exchange, guidance or business support service in each participating city has a multi-year or recurring budget that is not project money and, where the service needs one, a public or private space the city provides or pays for.

Initial steps. A first milestone could be one service with a funding line that runs beyond the project and, where the service needs one, a lease. Two steps lead to it:

- a map of the city's repair, reuse, exchange, guidance and business support services, with provider, users, annual cost, funding source and which of them stop within a year unless a decision is taken;
- one service moved onto a budget line or contract that is not project money and, where it needs one, given a public or private space at low rent.

Indicators.

- The number of repair, reuse, exchange, guidance and business support services with a funding source that is not a project.
- The number of months each service has operated without interruption.
- The length of the lease on each service's space.
- The number of repairs completed, items redistributed and businesses supported, in the units each service already keeps.

> *"Circular products and lifestyles need places where they can be tested and implemented. It should be as convenient as any linear business model." (a project partner, Germany, partner survey)*[23]
>
> *"I fully resonate with the need for a public space / hub where representatives of all sectors could meet and start solving our waste and resource problems through collaborative entrepreneurship, design and innovation." (a climate educator, Poland)*[34, 44]

Recommendation 5. Ensure that the circular tasks national plans assign to cities and other municipalities are funded and staffed

Recommended measure. National and regional governments should define the circular tasks their plans assign to cities and other municipalities, including the tasks carried out with cultural and creative organisations, and agree the cost, funding and staffing of each task, so that each task is written into a law, a budget line or a statutory plan. When a national plan is written or revised, cities, other municipalities and their associations should have a set way to send the ministry the results and costs of their own circular work, and receive a formal response.[41]

Target groups.

- National ministries for environment or climate and for the economy, which write the national plans.
- Finance and local government ministries, which decide what cities and other municipalities are paid for.
- Regional authorities, where they assign or fund municipal tasks.
- Associations of municipalities, which can carry a costed task for many cities at once.
- Cities and other municipalities, which hold the evidence of what works.



Rationale. Participants in the consultation in Estonia, Germany and Latvia reported that national plans expect cities and other municipalities to carry circular tasks and often do not fund them. In Riga, city officers said that Latvia's national action plan states that municipalities should support the circular economy but gives them no mandate to spend, and that circularity is not a mandatory municipal task, so no budget follows. In Kiel, a city officer described circularity as a voluntary task on top of the cities' legal obligations. The federal reusable-packaging offering is an obligation cities must enforce without compensation, and studies the officer cited put the reuse rate in the sector at 1.8 %, up from 1. Staff capacity sets the limit even where a strategy has a budget. In Estonia, the gap is capacity as much as money, and the ministry described municipalities asking for help without saying what they need.[12, 25, 32, 40, 44]

Participants from the Estonian Ministry of Climate said they would welcome concrete recommendations from cities and a roadmap of solutions for municipalities. A Finnish procurement officer said that nothing works unless there is a rule, and that circular procurement costs more, so someone has to be willing to pay. In Latvia, a civil society organisation said that what is not written into legislation gets changed too easily. The next national plans are being written now.[11, 12, 15, 21, 32, 35, 41]

Good practices.

- The six pilot cities: a public purchasing group used pre-commercial procurement to fund the design of circular solutions, with design completed by April 2026 and prototype testing running to September 2026.[53]
- Malmö, Sweden: reused furniture rose from 8.6 % of the value of the city's office furniture purchases in 2019 to 31.6 % in 2025.[70]
- The Nordic countries: household biowaste collection exists because regulation required it.[42]

No practice on record shows a municipal circular task costed, funded and staffed through a national plan; the three above show parts of the arrangement.

2030 direction. By 2030, in each participating country at least one municipal circular task has been introduced or revised with its cost, funding and staffing written into law, a budget line or a statutory plan, and national guidance cites documented city practice.

Initial steps. A first milestone could be one municipal circular task with its cost, funding and staffing agreed between an association of municipalities and the ministry. Two steps lead to it:

- one costed task, with its cost, a funding route and the evidence from a city that has already done it, submitted by an association of municipalities in the next national consultation, at present Estonia's National Circularity Plan, and the ministry's formal response on record;[11, 32, 44]
- where a city wants to start with a task it controls, circular award criteria in one procurement category, costed and staffed as the example.[35, 37]

Indicators.

- The number of municipal circular tasks with identified costs, funding and staffing.
- The number of city submissions to national consultations, and the share taken up.



- The number of days from a city's submission to the ministry's formal response.
- The share of a city's tenders with circular award criteria.
- The reuse or collection rate for each mandated task that has one, such as the reuse rate under Germany's reusable-packaging obligation, read against the national targets in Annex B.

> *"In one project a locally available product lost to an imported alternative, because the procurement was awarded primarily on price." (a city project manager, Finland)*[37, 44]
>
> *"In order to make a change, this needs a regulation." (a business incubator, Estonia, partner survey)*[23]

Recommendation 6. Measure the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to the circular economy and include it in official reporting and budget decisions

Recommended measure. Cities and national agencies should add a set of indicators for the cultural and creative sectors' circular work to the reporting they already do (climate accounts, waste reporting, procurement reporting, culture reporting and municipal indices) and publish them through those reports, alongside an owner of the indicator. What is counted, and how, should be agreed first, separating activity and reach (participations, visitors) from circular results (repairs completed, items reused, material kept in use). The published figures should be used when funding and services are reviewed. Preferably no new instrument is created.[32, 43]

Target groups.

- National statistical and environment agencies, which run the waste data systems and the indices.
- Culture ministries, which report on the sectors.
- City monitoring teams and the owners of climate accounts and waste reporting, which publish the city's figures.
- Finance departments and council budget committees, which use the figures when funding is reviewed.
- Research organisations, which test the indicators.

Rationale. No indicator at EU or national level identifies the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to the circular economy separately. The national targets are material, waste and recycling figures; none counts the sectors' work (Annex B). The six pilot cities measured their work in participations, self-assessed knowledge, items collected, visitors and one reuse rate, units that cannot be added to one another. Limited evidence was a barrier for 8 of 19 respondents to the external survey, and case studies were the content they most requested. The City of Tallinn does not measure the contribution of the cultural and creative sectors to the circular economy, and its circular economy department asked whether the aim is to measure the sectors' activities or the circular outcomes of those activities. An adviser at the Estonian Ministry of Culture, giving a personal view, pointed to the



country's regular creative economy statistics and mapping as the place to add it, reusing existing data and avoiding a new layer of reporting.[1 to 5, 20, 24, 46, 84]

In Gdynia, the project partners said that results become useless for the city if they are not written into policy, and focus group participants said that people want results and proof from the process, including how much money was made. Participants from the Estonian Ministry of Climate said that data can be made to fit whatever result is wanted. The Estonian Ministry of Culture described the realistic next step as mapping how the sectors already contribute and what blocks them. A city project manager in Finland wrote that examples are the currency inside an administration.[28, 32, 34, 37, 43, 44]

Good practices.

- Estonia: a real-time national waste data system run with municipalities and waste operators.[32]
- Aarhus, Denmark: data, climate accounts and forecasts presented to the city council every year, under a plan certified by C40.[69]
- Malmö, Sweden: reused furniture counted as a share of the value of the city's office furniture purchases, 8.6 % in 2019 and 31.6 % in 2025.[70]
- Roskilde Festival, Denmark: waste reported against published 2028 targets, 1,700 tonnes at a 22 % recycling rate in 2025 against targets of 1,000 tonnes and 65 %.[72]

2030 direction. By 2030, participating cities and agencies report the sectors' circular work through an existing framework with agreed definitions, in successive cycles, so that like activities can be compared across cities where a funded organisation agrees to host the comparison.

Initial steps. A first milestone could be one reporting cycle for one activity, completed and published through an existing report, with each measure's unit, inclusion and exclusion rules, baseline date, source, frequency and owner. Two steps lead to it:

- a city publishes the figures it already holds as its baseline, as the pilot cities can with the figures in Section 2.2;[1 to 5, 44]
- one statistical or research organisation tests, in two cities, whether the six areas of activity can be reported as a category within the data it already collects.

Indicators.

- The number of the sectors' circular activities in a city with a recorded baseline.
- The number of consecutive reporting cycles completed.
- The number of existing reports that carry an indicator for the sectors.
- The number of council or ministry decisions that cite the published indicators.

> *"A realistic step would be to map how cultural and creative organisations already contribute to sustainability and circularity objectives, and to identify practical barriers they face." (a national culture ministry, Estonia)*[43]
>
> *"Seventeen areas are too many. Every industry needs to choose." (a strategy lead, Finland, on the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals)*[31]



3.2 Conclusions

This section draws the six recommendations together. It sets out the four gaps found at EU, national and city level, what the 2026 consultation added, the policy processes open until 2030, and how the roadmap is followed up.

Cross-cutting findings. Four gaps recur at EU, national and city level:[23, 24, 31 to 41, 46]

- recognition: none of the eight national circular economy plans names the cultural and creative sectors (Recommendation 1);
- funding and cost: work that combines culture and circularity fits neither cultural funding nor circular economy, innovation and business funding, and the repair, reuse and business support services that do the work run on project money (Recommendations 2 and 4);
- coordination and capacity: culture, climate, environment, waste, procurement and economic development sit in separate departments and ministries, and coordination between them depends on individual officers (Recommendation 3);
- mandate, measurement and continuity: the circular tasks national plans assign to cities and other municipalities are voluntary and unfunded, and no indicator counts the cultural and creative sectors' contribution (Recommendations 5 and 6).

Each of the six recommendations addresses one of these gaps, as the cross-references show, and each can be taken up on its own.

Contribution of the stakeholder consultation. Two findings were made in more than one city in the 2026 consultation. First, practitioners in the sessions asked to be told what the rules require of them, what it costs and where it has already worked, and not for new terms and labels. Second, the reason for failure given most often was the same: no named organisation or position responsible, with a budget.[31 to 41]

The problems were weighted differently in each country:[31 to 44]

- in Finland, EU, national and city timetables that change after a company has invested;
- in Estonia, too few specialists, and rules businesses cannot tell are mandatory or optional;
- in Latvia, positions that survive reorganisation and municipal tasks that arrive without funding;
- in Poland, the cost and perceived risk of green investment;
- in Germany, money and staff in the municipal departments, and a clear owner for each task.

The recommendations are written so that each country can start with the problem it named. The consultation did not reach funding agencies or producer responsibility organisations, and Denmark is covered through the public record, one survey response and the partner's published case study (Section 1.3).

Policy windows to 2030. The processes below were open at the evidence cut-off date and should be checked before being relied on. An EU directive typically takes eighteen months to two years to enter



national law, and during that time the sectors and the organisations that represent them can take part in the national consultation.[18]

- EU Circular Economy Act: proposal due before the end of 2026. Recommendations 1 and 5.[15, 50 to 52]
- AgoraEU programme 2028 to 2034: under negotiation. Recommendation 2.[22]
- Producer responsibility schemes for textiles and footwear: required in every member state by 17 April 2028. Recommendations 2 and 4.[17]
- Right to Repair Directive: applies from 31 July 2026. Recommendation 4.[18]
- Packaging regulation: applies from 12 August 2026, reusable take-away packaging from February 2028, reuse targets from 2030. Recommendations 1 and 6.[19]
- Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation: working plan 2025 to 2030, textiles first, with possible minimum public procurement requirements. Recommendations 1 and 5.[16]
- Regional, national and city plans: the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region action plan under review in 2026; Estonia's National Circularity Plan in drafting; Latvia's National Action Plan for the Circular Economy, which runs from 2020 to 2027; Poland's Roadmap towards the Circular Economy of September 2019, which expired in 2023 and has not been updated; Turku's circular economy roadmap updated for 2027. Recommendations 1 and 5.[11, 12, 14, 21, 44]

Follow-up. This roadmap creates no new instrument and no monitoring body. Follow-up could run through Recommendation 6: the indicators published by their existing owners through the reports that already exist, in successive cycles; a comparison between cities of measures with the same unit where a funded organisation agrees to host it; and each city reporting through its own system where none does. The roadmap is presented at the CCC final event in Kiel on 30 September 2026 and in a recorded webinar, and its evidence base is held by the project partners.[47]



Annex A Pilot city profiles

Each profile records what the city built under the project, who took part, the figures the partners have confirmed and what the 2026 consultation added. Figures are given in the units the partners used and are not converted or added across cities (Section 1.3). Aarhus is described from the public record only.

Turku, Finland

Pilot. A cross-department co-creation forum (the Circular Economy Breakfasts) and a creative incubator, run by the City of Turku with Humak University of Applied Sciences and Valonia; the ReTurku Circular Economy Carnival grew out of the forum.[1]

Target group. Municipal staff and experts working on culture, the green transition, the circular economy, citizen engagement and circular business, in the forum; multidisciplinary teams of circular economy experts, students, companies and creatives in the incubator.[1]

Participation. Forum: about 15 people per session, every two to three months, thirteen sessions between September 2024 and October 2026. Incubator: 20 to 25 participants in five-person teams, 28 January to 2 April 2025; in the surveys before and after, the share of "very high" and "high" answers on circular economy knowledge rose from 48 to 72 %. Confirmed by the City of Turku and Humak on 2 September 2026.[1, 44]

What the city built. The Circular Turku roadmap was adopted by the city board in 2021, before the project; its update starts in autumn 2026 for adoption in 2027. The forum began as the platform for co-developing the pilots and during 2026 became a forum for cooperation between municipal sectors. Before project funding ends, the city assigned ownership of the forum to two service areas, Cultural Promotion and the Climate, Nature and Circular Economy team in Business and Economic Development Services. The city's Climate Plan, adopted in 2026, states that the shared story of Turku as a climate and nature city is also built with the creative industries and the arts.[1, 44, 61, 62]

What the 2026 consultation added. Finnish contributors expect attendance at cross-sector formats to weaken once project support ends unless participants see a benefit to themselves. Two procurement contributors named purchasing rules as the decisive tool; in one project a locally available product lost to an imported alternative because the procurement was awarded primarily on price. Procurement was preferred to planning rules because its requirements can be revised as legislation changes. The creative sector was absent from the working group of the city's climate plan until the city's project team argued for its inclusion.[27, 31, 35, 37, 44]

Tallinn, Estonia

Pilot. Incubation for Creatives, run by the Tallinn Business Incubators Foundation.[2]

Target group. Designers, material researchers, artists, creatives and support organisations.[2]



Participation. 496 participations across 17 sessions in five modules, repeat attendance included; confirmed in writing on 13 August 2026. About 780 people attended the 14 seminars of the Design meets Science series, run with TalTech University and other partners; confirmed in writing on 14 September 2026. The 156 m² exhibition, The Circular Economy in Practice, is open to the public, has been used in the school programme and was part of the Tallinn Design Festival 2026.[2, 63]

What the city built. The incubator converted circular economy guidelines into guidance that creative and maker businesses could apply directly to their business plans; the five modules let a company enter at the point relevant to it. The City of Tallinn adopted its circular economy development plan to 2035 (Tallinna ringmajanduse arengukava 2035) on 12 June 2025, and Tallinn Business Incubators took part in the workshops and stakeholder events held during its preparation.[2, 63, 87]

What the 2026 consultation added. Participants from the Ministry of Climate asked cities to say exactly what funding and what capacity they need. Practitioners said that strict sustainability policies fail inside firms without a mandate from the top, and that companies cannot tell which requirements are mandatory and which are optional. The National Waste Management Plan runs to 2028 and is to be followed by a National Circularity Plan, now in drafting. The Ministry of Culture answered in writing after the draft was circulated: it does not lead circular economy or waste policy, which the Ministry of Climate coordinates; some cultural funding instruments carry environmentally responsible practice as a sub-criterion of limited weight and no instrument rewards circular outcomes; a realistic step within two to three years is to map how cultural and creative organisations already contribute and what blocks them.[11, 32, 43]

Riga, Latvia

Pilot. Two pilots: the Bolderāja Library Garden, for citizen engagement, and the national Circular Economy Forum 2025, for business, run by the Riga Energy Agency with the City of Riga. The Riga Circular Economy Strategy 2040 is a deliverable of the project.[3, 85]

Target group. Residents of the pilot neighbourhood; city and national policy actors through the first Latvian circular economy forum.[3]

Participation. The Circular Economy Forum 2025 had about 350 participants, more than 100 speakers and 32 sessions in three rooms over eight hours. No participation figure is on record for the library garden.[3]

What the city built. The garden was built with reused materials. The Riga Circular Economy Strategy 2040 supported the city's Circular Economy Action Plan 2030, which the City Council approved in August 2026; the action plan is not itself an output of the project. The forum was created because Latvia had no single framework or network for exchanging information on the circular economy.[3, 64, 65, 85]

What the 2026 consultation added. A municipal officer set three conditions for any measure: convenient, easy to understand and no more expensive, and if more expensive, clear about the value. A civil society organisation proposed that producer responsibility systems fund prevention and reuse, and said that what is not written into legislation gets changed too easily, because ministries have been

split and merged. City officers said that the national action plan expects municipalities to support the circular economy without a mandate to spend.[25, 33, 41]

Kiel, Germany

Pilot. The Repair and Upcycling Festival, organised by Anscharcampus and the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein with Zero Waste Kiel e.V.; the City of Kiel is an associated organisation of the project and was not involved in organising the festivals. Alongside it, a Circular Design Journey with the Muthesius University of Fine Arts and Design and the Circular Design Hub Hamburg, in which industrial design students made more than 20 products in five days from scrap-yard material; a circular design workshop in March 2026; and a 2024 workshop at the Waterkant Festival with three circular businesses.[4, 44, 79 to 81, 83]

Target group. Residents, and local community initiatives from the cultural and circular sectors.[4]

Participation. 10 May 2025: more than 750 participants and over 30 workshops. 9 May 2026: more than 600 participants and more than 25 workshops. Confirmed by Anscharcampus on 8 September 2026.[4, 44, 66, 67]

What the city built. The festival set out to make circular practices in everyday life visible in an easy and enjoyable way, and contributed to the goals of the city's Zero Waste strategy, which predates the project and carries more than 100 measures with a prioritised set. The festival was organised independently, with its own steering group, building on one of the networks created around the strategy. In October 2025 the organisers published an open letter on the right to repair, backed by more than ten civil society organisations, asking the city for repair centres, access to reusable devices at recycling centres, repair in public procurement and repair projects in schools. The city's response is not on record.[4, 44, 82]

What the 2026 consultation added. A city officer described circular municipal work as voluntary work alongside legal duties, some federal obligations as arriving without resources, and five years of trying to involve the creative sector and universities in city processes without success. The city's review of the draft added public drinking fountains as an example of an obligation that arrived without resources, and that even where a strategy has a budget the limit is staff capacity in the departments that implement the measures.[40, 44]

Gdynia, Poland

Pilot. A bulky waste reuse solution, starting with furniture, developed and tested by the Gdynia Design Centre (PPNT Gdynia) with the Pomorskie in the European Union association.[5]

Target group. Designed with and for creative professionals, taken up by residents; cultural institutions through the Green Institutions network.[5]

Participation. 2024: a report on how residents dispose of bulky items, and workshops with city representatives. 2025: 34 pieces of furniture collected in the pilot. 2026: 13,287 visitors at Gdynia



Design Days, where two exhibitions funded by the project were shown. September 2026: the Pass It On web platform and the residents' booklet "BIG THINGS in Gdynia". Figures supplied by the partners on 3 September 2026.[5, 44]

What the city built. The solution was documented so that other municipalities can adopt it and is published as the Pass It On platform. Creative professionals took part in the workshops with the city, had access to the warehouse where collected items were stored, ran workshops on stool renovation and urban furniture design, produced two exhibitions and wrote much of the booklet. City sponsorship ended after the change of administration; the incoming Waste Management Unit then took part in the residents' booklet. The Gdynia Design Centre is a member of the Green Institutions network in Gdańsk, Gdynia, Sopot and Pomorskie, which shares exhibition systems, equipment and furniture between institutions.[5, 28]

What the 2026 consultation added. The project partners describe the main barrier as the cost and perceived risk of green investment. Some participants in the Gdynia session added that green terminology puts off part of the audience. Participants described three routes: a metropolitan association through which, according to one contributor, about sixty municipalities and counties can pool European funds; voluntary institutional networks; and demonstration in place of terminology. Participants said that certification can look like marketing when results are unpublished, and that measurable results convince. Every participant asked for a Tri-City circular hub where entrepreneurs, institutions and residents could find each other, and none could name who would fund or host it.[34, 38, 44]

Aarhus, Denmark

Pilot. Circular economy measures within the city's Climate Plan 2025 to 2030; project records name the City of Aarhus Climate Secretariat and the Lifestyle and Design Cluster. The Lifestyle and Design Cluster ran the project's activities at Lifestyle Hub Aarhus, a creative community in the Sydhavn district for entrepreneurs, designers, brands and companies in fashion, furniture, retail and the creative industries.[6, 47, 86]

Participation. About 40 people are based at the hub daily, and around 70 take part in the design network meetings held every other month. No attendance figures are on record for the project's own activities. No consultation session was held in Denmark (Section 1.3). The Lifestyle and Design Cluster answered the review on 17 September 2026 with its published case study; the City of Aarhus did not reply to the review copy.[86]

What the city built. The plan carries about DKK 300 million for the climate effort, C40 certification and annual reporting of data, climate accounts and forecasts to the city council, and its measures include circular resource use. The role, resources and measures for cultural and creative actors within it are not on record. At the hub, students of VIA University College made fashion collections from a department store's leftover textiles, which were exhibited in Aarhus and then sold in the store; furniture students made conference stools from a furniture manufacturer's residual materials; and a permanent exhibition shows textile waste turned into artworks. The City of Aarhus hosted a project workshop with the cluster.[68, 69, 86]

Annex B National plans, targets and EU instruments

B.1 The eight national circular economy documents[7 to 14]

Each of the eight Baltic Sea Region countries has a national circular economy strategy, roadmap or action plan in force or in preparation: Denmark's Action Plan for Circular Economy 2020 to 2032, Germany's National Circular Economy Strategy of 2024, Finland's Strategic Programme to Promote a Circular Economy and Roadmap 2.0, Sweden's National Circular Economy Strategy of 2020, Estonia's Circular Economy White Paper of 2022 and the National Circularity Plan now in drafting, Latvia's National Action Plan for the Circular Economy 2020 to 2027, Lithuania's Circular Economy Roadmap and Poland's Roadmap towards the Circular Economy. Four have set quantified targets. Germany doubles the share of secondary raw materials in total raw material use by 2030 and cuts municipal waste per head by 10 % by 2030. Finland doubles its circular material use rate and its resource productivity by 2035 and holds primary raw material consumption at the 2015 level. Denmark sorts 80 % of its plastic out of incineration by 2030 and makes its waste sector climate-neutral by 2030. Estonia's circular economy roadmap sets a circular material use rate of 25 % by 2028. Poland's roadmap set 41 actions and no figures. In the documents read for this roadmap, every quantified target is a material, waste or recycling figure; none counts design, repair or reuse services, or the work of the cultural and creative sectors. Against the EU target of a circular material use rate of 22.4 % by 2030, the rate in the six project countries in 2024 ranged from 2.0 % in Finland, where biomass and extractive flows enlarge the denominator, to 20.5 % in Estonia; the country series follows.[7 to 14, 20, 48]

Country	Document	Status	Names the sectors	Quantified targets, read at source in September 2026
Denmark	Action Plan for Circular Economy, adopted July 2021	2020 to 2032, in force	No	Waste sector climate-neutral by 2030; 80 % of plastic sorted out of incineration by 2030; household waste recycling 55, 60 and 65 % by 2025, 2030 and 2035; incineration capacity down 30 % between 2020 and 2030; all public procurement eco-labelled by 2030. Design is named: 80 % of a product's impact is decided at the design stage[7]



Country	Document	Status	Names the sectors	Quantified targets, read at source in September 2026
Germany	National Circular Economy Strategy (NKWS), Cabinet decision of 4 December 2024	In force	No	Share of secondary raw materials in total raw material use doubled by 2030 from about 13 %; municipal waste per head down 10 % by 2030 and 20 % by 2045 against 2020; primary raw material consumption reduced towards 6 to 8 tonnes per head by 2045, from 15.3 tonnes in 2021[8]
Finland	Strategic Programme to Promote a Circular Economy, Government resolution of April 2021, and Roadmap 2.0	In force; revisions are the entry point	No	Domestic primary raw material consumption in 2035 not above the 2015 level; resource productivity doubled by 2035 from 2015; circular material use rate doubled by 2035[9]
Sweden	National Circular Economy Strategy	2020, in force	No	Not verified at source for this roadmap; no targets cited[10]
Estonia	Circular Economy White Paper 2022; National Waste Management Plan to 2028, extended by a year; National Circularity Plan in drafting	Open window	No	The White Paper sets directions without figures. The Climate Ministry's Circular Economy Roadmap of 31 October 2023 sets a circular material use rate of 25 % by 2028, packaging waste recycling of 70 % by 2028 and municipal waste prepared for reuse or recycled at 65 % by 2035[11]
Latvia	National Action Plan for the Circular Economy, adopted by Cabinet Order 489 of 4 September 2020	2020 to 2027	No	The order records baselines: resource productivity of 0.9 euro per kilogram against an EU average of 2, and recycling of 35 % in 2019. The plan's 2027 targets were not verified at source[12]
Lithuania	Circular Economy Roadmap; Guidelines for the Transition to a Circular Economy by 2035 (Government, 2023)	In force	No	Secondary raw material use index at least the EU average by 2025 (4 % in 2021 against 11.7); resource productivity towards the EU average (0.93 against 2.29 euro per kilogram). The guidelines were read from a file published as a draft; the figures are to be confirmed against the adopted text[13]



Country	Document	Status	Names the sectors	Quantified targets, read at source in September 2026
Poland	Roadmap towards the Circular Economy, Council of Ministers, September 2019	Expired in 2023, not updated	No	41 actions and no numeric targets. The Supreme Audit Office found 28 of the 41 actions completed by November 2023[14]

B.2 EU instruments and measures to 2030[15 to 22]

#	Instrument	What it requires	Status
15	EU Circular Economy Act	A single market for secondary raw materials; proposal due before the end of 2026	Proposal pending[50 to 52]
16	Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation, working plan 2025 to 2030	Textiles, furniture and mattresses among the priority products; a repairability score; minimum public procurement requirements; extension in phases to nearly all products	In force[60]
17	Waste Framework Directive, as amended in 2018 and 2025	60 % of municipal waste prepared for reuse or recycled by 2030; textile and footwear producer responsibility schemes by 17 April 2028	In force[57, 76]
18	Right to Repair Directive (EU) 2024/1799	Producers' repair obligations; transposition and application by 31 July 2026	In force[58]
19	Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (EU) 2025/40	Applies from 12 August 2026; reuse targets from 2030; reusable take-away packaging from 12 February 2028	In force[59]
20	Circular material use rate	EU rate of 12.2 % in 2024 against a 2030 target of 22.4 %; the European Environment Agency reports the EU as not on track; the monitoring framework has no indicator for the cultural and creative sectors	Eurostat data of 24 November 2025[48, 49]
21	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, action plan	Update applies from 2026; culture and circular economy sit in separate priority areas	Open window[46]



#	Instrument	What it requires	Status
22	Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2028 to 2034 and AgoraEU 2028 to 2034	The programmes through which the sectors' transnational work is funded; programming open for input	Open windows[56]

B.3 Circular material use rate, 2015 and 2024[20, 49]

% of overall material use; Eurostat dataset of 24 November 2025, extracted 18 August 2026.

Country	2015	2024	Change, points
Denmark	8.3	9.4	+1.1
Estonia	11.4	20.5	+9.1
Finland	5.2	2.0	−3.2
Germany	11.7	14.8	+3.1
Latvia	5.3	6.8	+1.5
Lithuania	4.1	4.2	+0.1
Poland	11.9	7.7	−4.2
Sweden	6.7	10.4	+3.7
Netherlands	27.4	32.7	+5.3
EU 27	11.2	12.2	+1.0

The rate is shaped by industrial structure and material flows; Finland's biomass and extractive flows enlarge its denominator. It is context for the size of the task, not a ranking of national performance. The Netherlands has the highest rate in the EU in 2024; Sweden and the Netherlands appear for comparison, not as project countries.

Annex C Stakeholder consultation and surveys

This annex holds the record behind Section 1.3: the two surveys and the consultation sessions the body cites as items 23 to 45. Contributors are identified by role and country; no individual is named. Session records are structured notes, not transcripts, and quotations are reproduced only where the speaker confirmed the wording.

C.1 Partner survey[23]

Internal survey of the project partners, May 2026: ten submissions from all six pilot cities, nine of them complete and tabulated. Respondents named the barriers they faced (number of respondents naming each): funding, 6; coordination between culture and sustainability, 6; skills, 4; short-term thinking, 3; coordination between local and national level, 3; procurement, 3; the business case, 3. The survey also asked who should lead, what could unlock progress, and for views on five preliminary recommendations. Aggregates only are printed; the raw export is held by the project.

C.2 External stakeholder survey[24]

Open survey, June to August 2026: 47 records, of which 19 complete responses from eight countries, one of them from the partner side. Barriers named (number of respondents): collaboration, 9; funding, 8; evidence, 8; skills, 7; showing value, 6; coordination, 5; awareness, 5. Where the sectors add most value: design for reuse and repair, 11; public awareness and behaviour change, 10; place-based innovation, 8; community, 7; adaptive reuse, 6. Where action is most needed: the city level, 11. What the roadmap should focus on: case studies, 8; funding, 8; direct support, 6. Aggregates only are printed; the raw export is held by the project.

C.3 Consultation record[25 to 45, 84]

#	Date	Session	Who took part, by type
25	18 May 2026	Riga partner interview	City of Riga, two officers
26	18 May 2026	Tallinn partner interview	Tallinn Business Incubators, two staff
27	18 May 2026	Turku partner interview	City of Turku, project staff
28	21 May 2026	Gdynia partner interview	Pomorskie in the EU, three staff

#	Date	Session	Who took part, by type
29	21 May 2026	Kiel partner interview	Anscharcampus, the Heinrich Böll Foundation Schleswig-Holstein and Zero Waste Kiel
30	4 June 2026	Expert interview, United Kingdom	An academic expert in sustainable design
31	4 August 2026	Turku focus group	A city culture officer; a cultural strategy lead; a researcher in textiles and fashion
32	4 August 2026	Tallinn focus group	Ministry of Climate, two officials; City of Tallinn culture department, one; an architect working in sustainability
33	5 August 2026	Riga one-to-one	City of Riga, one officer
34	6 August 2026	Gdynia focus group	A fashion consultant; an architect; a climate educator; a business advisor
35	11 August 2026	Turku one-to-one, procurement	City of Turku, procurement services
36	13 August 2026	Turku one-to-one, research	A doctoral researcher, Finland
37	13 August 2026	Turku one-to-one, district redevelopment and procurement	City of Turku, a project manager
38	13 August 2026	Tri-City one-to-one	A cultural institution programme manager, Tri-City
39	13 August 2026	Lithuania one-to-one	A university design centre, Lithuania
40	13 August 2026	Kiel one-to-one	City of Kiel, one officer
41	13 August 2026	Latvia one-to-one	Zero Waste Latvia
42	8 June and 5 August 2026	Sweden, two business conversations	Cradlenet; Nordic Circular Hotspot
43	3 September 2026	Estonia, written answers to five questions	Ministry of Culture

#	Date	Session	Who took part, by type
44	25 August to 8 September 2026	Written review round on the draft	41 copies sent, 21 to partners and 20 to external reviewers; 17 replies with content, from Turku (the city and Humak), Kiel (the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Zero Waste Kiel, Anscharcampus and the City of Kiel), Gdynia (Pomorskie in the EU and PPNT), Tallinn (the ministry, two), external reviewers in the Tri-City and Turku, the Danish Cultural Institute and Circular Intelligence
45	10 August to 8 September 2026	Coordinators' written comments and confirmations	The Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture and the Danish Cultural Institute
84	14 September 2026	Estonia, written answers on the six recommendations	City of Tallinn, circular economy department; Ministry of Climate, circular economy department; an adviser at the Ministry of Culture, giving a personal view

The consultation was designed for depth rather than statistical representation; the limits are set out in Section 1.3. No consultation session was held in Denmark; evidence for Denmark is drawn from the public record, one partner survey response and the partner's published case study.[86]



Annex D References and glossary

D.1 References

The numbers are those cited as raised numbers at the end of paragraphs throughout the document. Items 1 to 45 and item 84 are project records; the other items from 46 onward are project deliverables and published sources.

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22. Interreg Baltic Sea Region 2028 to 2034 and AgoraEU 2028 to 2034, programming documents (reference 56).
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D.2 Glossary

- Cultural and creative sectors and industries: visual and performing arts, design, media and advertising; heritage organisations, museums, libraries, events and festivals; and the community practice, education and creative businesses that connect them.
- Circular economy: keeping the value of products, materials and resources in use for as long as possible and wasting as little as possible: sharing, leasing, reuse, repair, refurbishment, recycling, rethinking and redesigning.
- Circular material use rate: the share of material recovered and fed back into the economy in overall material use, as measured by Eurostat.[49]
- Producer responsibility organisation: as glossed in Section 1.2.
- Cities and other municipalities: the local authorities of the Baltic Sea Region, whatever their size and legal form.