

ACR+ ACTIVITY REPORT



2024

**THE NETWORK OF
CITIES AND REGIONS
ACCELERATING THE
CIRCULAR
ECONOMY
TRANSITION IN THEIR
TERRITORIES AND
BEYOND**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

VISION 4

5 THEMATIC AREAS 5

A YEAR IN REVIEW 10

THE NETWORK IN KEY NUMBERS 13

SOME OF OUR DIRECT SERVICES TO MEMBERS THIS YEAR 14

30 YEARS OF ADVANCING MATERIAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

2024 marked the 30th anniversary of ACR+. We took the opportunity of that celebration to reflect not only on the milestones achieved as a network but also on the challenges that lie ahead in our shared journey towards sustainability. The ACR+ network originates in 1994, as the Association of Cities for Recycling (AVR-ACR), formed to address the European Union's packaging waste directive and promote recycling practices among public administrations. Over time, following the changes and concerns of the field, it evolved to shift from recycling to resource efficiency and waste prevention. It adopted its current name in 2015 to reflect broader goals of sustainable resource management. Fast forward to nowadays, the network's mission remains highly relevant. The urgent need for climate action, sustainable use of our resources and just transitions is magnified by the current political and environmental landscape.

2024 represented a pivotal moment for Europe with the election of a new European Parliament and the transition to a new College of Commissioners. For us, it also meant a unique opportunity both to raise our visibility and to contribute with our 30 years of expertise to promote a holistic approach to circular economy. The renewal of these key European institutions came at a critical juncture. Seeing this urgency, we teamed up with other key European networks of cities and regions, joined several coalitions, and gave our support to different initiatives in line with our vision. Our goal is to reinforce our position and our ideas towards EU institutions and policy-makers. We want to ensure that achieving well-being for all within planetary boundaries stay high on the agenda.

Our vision guided discussions during the General Assembly in June, during which members reaffirmed the importance of cities and regions in driving systemic change. The annual gathering underscored the urgency of accelerating the transition by prioritising sustainable resource use, reducing overconsumption, and fully adhering to the principles of the waste hierarchy.

Looking ahead, ACR+ will continue to advocate for policies that enable a circular transition, empower our members, and foster innovation. We will push for transformative actions that integrate sustainability into competitiveness and economic equity.

We invite you to join us in building a sustainable, inclusive future where resources are valued and waste is minimised.



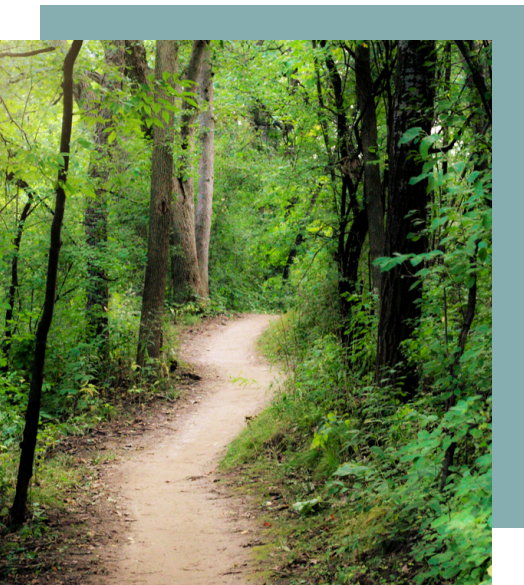


OUR VISION

In April 2024, we published our vision titled “No sustainable future without a just, sufficient and circular transition: a blueprint for action towards 2030 and beyond”. In it, ACR+ envisions **vibrant cities and regions where economic growth, and environmental well-being go hand in hand**. This vision is achieved through policies that promote a fair distribution of resources and access to public services, ensuring positive impacts on the environment and public health.

ACR+ recognises critical role of cities and regions in driving sustainable action, particularly in transitioning to a circular economy. We believe decentralised authorities are best positioned to lead this transition due to their proximity to communities and business, enabling them to foster strong partnerships and drive impactful change.

By 2030, ACR+ aims to be the leading source of information and resources for decentralised authorities committed to achieving a just transition to a circular economy. We are dedicated to break down silos and foster collaboration across different sectors and regions to accelerate progress towards this goal.



- * **NO GREEN AMBITIONS WILL BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT A CIRCULAR ECONOMY**
- * **THE TRANSITION WE NEED IS A JUST TRANSITION DRIVEN BY THE SUFFICIENCY PRINCIPLE**
- * **CITIES AND REGIONS ARE AT THE HEART OF SUSTAINABILITY ACTION**

5 THEMATIC AREAS

ACR+ focuses providing our members with concrete tools and approaches to enact the transition towards waste-free circular systems in their territories and beyond. By organising our work in 5 key thematic areas, we can better provide effective strategies to achieve this mission.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT



This topic within the ACR+ thematic area is strictly related to sectors such as urban planning and design, architecture, referring to buildings, public spaces and infrastructures, and, in general, construction and demolition value chains.

- * We organised a meetup with ACR+ members to exchange good practices, define topics of discussion and help break down silos.
- * We met bilaterally with ACR+ members that expressed interest in being further involved in the activities surrounding these topics. Additionally, the individual meetings allowed ACR+ to build up a list of members activities on this area.
- * Two more [transnational learning journeys of the Interreg Europe project INERTWASTE](#) took place in Maribor (Slovenia) and Marseille (France). The first focused on societal, technological and market challenges for the sustainable management of inert waste from industrial and construction processes. In France, stakeholders discussed good practices implemented by private construction project owners and how these initiatives can bring synergies in the territory. For both, we involved our members to share relevant good practices.
- * We contributed to the issue “Take no land no more: soil matters” of Territorial with an [article on the critical connection between circularity and the built environment](#).
- * We kept increasing our knowledge on the matter by attending events such as the Built Environment session of the World Circular Economy Forum, the Belgian Renovation Week, the New European Bauhaus Festival, etc.

CIRCULAR LIFESTYLES

The activities in this thematic area want to examine behaviour, assess consumption patterns and challenge the status quo and provoke behavioural change. It encourages our members to be game changers, speeding up the transition while maintaining a holistic approach balancing economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion.



- * We engaged ACR+ members in a series of **workshops on waste prevention in large events**, as part of the MINEV project, with ACR+ members sharing best practices. Two topics were mainly tackled: **waste minimisation in entrepreneurial and scientific events** and **waste minimisation during the design phase of cultural events**.
- * We prepared a **compendium of circular economy best practices for sports and cities**, providing insight into various processes and operations related to sporting events that could contribute to more circularity for cities.
- * We organised a **webinar series** on the following topics: **improved procurement, event management, biodiversity and nature protection, environmental assessment and communications**, which allow for sport organisations and cities to improve their waste reduction efforts and promote efficient use of resources. The series counted with more than 50 registered participants.
- * Another successful edition of the **EWWR** brought together participants from 29 countries in **12 724 actions focused on waste prevention, reuse, repair, and recycling**. The 2024 thematic focus, food waste, highlighted the environmental and social challenges posed by the estimated 59.2 million tonnes of food wasted annually in the EU.
- * We **established connections and partnerships with relevant entities, experts, technicians and practitioners** in the fields of tourism, sports, behavior assessment, reuse and repair. The intention is to create a **network of practitioners** with which it can work on developing initiatives, proposals and organising workshops.



POLICY AND GOVERNANCE



The aim of this cross-cutting thematic area is to empower decentralised authorities in policymaking, ensuring their resources and competences match their responsibilities. This involves strengthening their position relative to national and EU levels, particularly during policy design

- * We began to work on a littering cost study with the Catalan Waste Agency and OVAM, both ACR+ members. The study aims to support local and regional authorities in determining the cost of cleaning. It is still ongoing, and results will be published in 2025.
- * We explored governance strategies to facilitate industrial symbiosis, identifying best practices and barriers. During the year ACR+ published a [short article explaining the role of local and regional authorities in encouraging industrial symbiosis](#), with examples from ACR+ members. We started working on a report based on this exploration and through consultation with ACR+ members and other cities and regions involved in Hubs4Circularity.
- * We facilitated knowledge-sharing and collaboration by organizing [meetings on textiles, public procurement, and reuse & repair](#) with ACR+ members. These meetings provided valuable insights into challenges and best practices, shaping future activities with a focus on EPR schemes and the upcoming textile collection obligation.
- * We organised two lunch debates of the [EPR Club](#), on the future of deposit refund systems and on EPR in the battle against fast fashion.
- * We published a [“Case study on introducing a deposit return system in Belgium”](#), accompanying [“Deposit Refund Systems in the EU – 2023 Update”](#).

				<i>Started</i> 	<i>Finished</i> 
					

SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

This thematic area focuses on creating a circular food system, encompassing the entire journey from farm to table and beyond. A key aspect of this involves tackling the challenges of organic waste management. This not only reduces reliance on synthetic alternatives but also contributes to the health of our soil and freshwater systems.



- * We developed [25 detailed factsheets on best practices in sustainable food systems](#) with a focus on food waste prevention, reduction and redistribution, and on the empowerment of short food supply chains. They are published on the SFS Innovation Platform and the EU FLW Prevention Hub.
- * We worked on a comparative analysis of fiscal instruments for food waste prevention. For it we assessed fiscal instruments on food donations and other fiscal incentives for reduction and prevention of food waste, and for the promotion of food redistribution and donations. Results have been gathered in a [briefing on the prevention of food waste by fiscal instruments](#).
- * We initiated the promotion of the identification of [Communities of Practices](#) and [Soil Living Labs](#) working on soil management in order to find out which ACR+ members are working on such initiatives and encourage all members to replicate them.
- * For its 2024 edition, the [European Week for Waste Reduction focused on food waste prevention](#). Several tools have been developed to support Action Developers.
- * We prepared a [guideline for Public Authorities that presents a collection of general recommendations and actual good practices for the uptake of fertilisers produced from waste and side streams](#). The guide is based on the outcomes of discussions with public authorities that are the front runners of circular fertiliser production and use in EU and offers actionable proposals to local and regional authorities.
- * We launched the [FOLOU Twinning Regions programme](#), started the recruitment phase of local and regional actors willing to act upon food losses generation in primary production. The programme will unfold throughout 2025-2026 and will provide participants with better understanding of food loss drivers, tools to measure and report food losses, and an array of online courses prepared by university teachers.

WASTE AND MATERIAL FLOWS



This thematic area focuses on the implementation of the waste hierarchy, while also taking the larger perspective of material resource flows. A better understanding of how different policies and local instruments impacts local performances can contribute to identify key recommendations, by conducting consistent comparisons and benchmarks.

- * We **supported several members to develop their waste plans**. In February, ACR+ presented the conclusions of its peer review of the Irish Regional Waste plan during a launch event in Limerick. ACR+ also actively participated in the Brussels' waste plan steering committee within the framework of the plan's revision.
- * The HOOP Cities and Policy Conference brought together cities and regions to discuss and learn about implementing circular bioeconomy solutions. A key focus was on **identifying regulatory barriers and policy drivers that can help accelerate the transition to a more sustainable bioeconomy**.
- * We took advantage of several EU-funded projects to organise different **study visits** focusing on specific aspects of waste management: **biowaste collection in urban areas** in Lyon (FR), **HORECA food waste management with underground containers in the historical centre** of Florence (IT), **biowaste in the hospitality industry, high rise building collection and end-use for biowaste-based products** in Bergen (NO). For these, we successfully invited several representatives of European cities and regions to foster peer exchanges on common challenges and potential solutions.
- * We prepared a report on **underground waste containers** for the Brussels Region in February 2024. The report is currently being translated and adapted for public dissemination.



A YEAR IN REVIEW

JANUARY

- We publish "[Case study on introducing a deposit return system in Belgium](#)", accompanies "[Deposit Refund Systems in the EU – 2023 Update](#)".
- The Water and Environment Support (WES) project releases a [roadmap](#) to address single-use plastic items in Jordan.
- We share [our view on the EU Waste Framework Directive revision](#), highlighting missed opportunities and recommending complementary actions to strengthen and enforce its provisions.
- We join a new project called [SOILL Start-Up](#), which is part of the broader "A Soil Deal for Europe" Mission.
- We organise the FOODRUS [second policy roundtable](#) on "Recommendations to Overcome Barriers in Food Waste Prevention and Reduction".
- We speak at the conference "Circular Venice: policy, practice and innovation compared".

FEBRUARY

- We kick off [REGENERA Water Sports](#), an initiative looking at governance around water bodies.
- OREN presents an [online training course](#) for rural entrepreneurs to drive sustainable change.
- We contribute to the LIFE BIOBEST project [policy brief](#) with insights into bio-waste management challenges in the EU.
- We are appointed as technical expert supporting preparation of the CoR Opinion on "The role of local and regional authorities in the transition towards a circular economy", Council presidency referral COR-2024-00709-00-01-PAC-TRA – ENVE-VII/049 Rapporteur: Loredana CAPONE (IT/PES). The opinion is later adopted in June.

MARCH

- The European Week for Waste Reduction announces that the 2024 edition will focus on [food waste](#).
- In an [article](#) featured in Territorial, the ESPON Magazine, we delve into the critical connection between circularity and the built environment.
- Together with over 80 leaders from global networks, NGOs, and national organisations, we urge EU policymakers to tackle textile waste in an [open letter](#).
- We launch a Photo Contest to celebrate 30 years promoting circular economy.
- We host the [ACCESS webinar series](#) exploring the environmental impact of sports.
- We organise the [FOODRUS Final Event](#) showcasing new tools and methods for advancing sustainable food systems.
- We, as part of Local Alliance, [call on the European Commission](#) to strengthen the implementation of the European Green Deal at the local level.

APRIL

- We partner with other European organisations to launch a [manifesto](#) urging EU decision-makers to prioritise sufficiency in the continent's strategic agenda.
- INERTWASTE contributes to a [policy brief](#) on circular and sustainable building sector.
- We participate in the 8th World Circular Economy Forum, collaborating with the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference.
- We explore the evolution of deposit return schemes and their implications in a [EPR Club Lunch-Debate](#).
- We orchestrate with our member Rijkswaterstaat the [C-PRONE](#) initiative, a 'one-stop shop' for everything happening in the realm of circular procurement.
- We play an active role throughout the World Circular Economy Forum and take the stage in Girona during the Waste in Progress Congress 2024.
- We join the [Mastery project](#), dedicated to amplifying green job opportunities by acknowledging micro-credentials.
- We provide an overview of PAYT across Europe and several good practices at a national webinar on the topic upon invitation of our member Afval Norge.

MAY

- We share [recommendations](#) for the improvement of the Soil Monitoring and Resilience Directive (Soil Monitoring Law)
- The [Circular Minds](#) project kicks off, aimed to scale up circular procurement practices in organisations.
- An [exchange](#) of the INERTWASTE project focuses on challenges for the valorisation of inert waste.
- We are part of the steering committee of the Regional Waste Plan of the Brussels-Capital Region.
- We provide [feedback and opinion](#) on the revision of the EU Waste Framework Directive.

JUNE

- We organise the [HOOP Cities and Policy Conference](#) aimed at advancing the urban circular bioeconomy.
- We participate in the [SFS innovation platform](#) with three projects: OREN, FOLOU, and FOODRUS.
- We arrive in Marseille for our [General Assembly](#) and the [EWWR 2023 Awards Ceremony](#).
- We urge for the immediate [adoption of Nature Restoration Law](#).
- We present a European panorama of waste management and upcoming policies at the General Assembly of our member Rudologia.
- We present BIOTRANSFORM project to a national working group of French regions on bioeconomy
- We speak at the Catalonia Circular, invited by our member the Catalan Waste Agency.

JULY

- [LIFE Biobest project](#) launches three guidelines on separate collection, quality compost and digestate, and governance and economic incentives for bio-waste separate collection and treatment.
- We reveal the winning shots of our Photo Contest.
- The [BIOTRANSFORM](#) project publishes reports and analysis of regional circular bioeconomy systems in six countries.
- We enhance soil health through the [PREPSOIL Mobile App](#).

AUGUST

- EWWR launches the EWWR 2024 factsheet: "[Reducing food waste in the EU: current challenges and future targets](#)".

SEPTEMBER

- The European Circular Innovation Valley project kicks off.
- The INERTWASTE project launches its series "Humans of INERTWASTE", which highlights the people driving the project's success.
- We meet with our fellow members of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform Coordination Group to shape Europe's circular economy goals.
- ACR+ Built Environment Thematic Area successfully holds its first Meet Up

OCTOBER

- We release a position paper in response to EU guidance on heating and cooling
- We support a policy briefing crafted by a coalition of social and environmental NGOs aimed at guiding the preparation of National Social Climate Plans.
- We support a letter advocating for an accelerated transition to a circular economy.
- As part of the FER-PLAY project, we organise several co-creation events to promote the advancement of circular fertilisers in Europe.
- The SPARKLE project officially starts with a kick-off meeting in Brussels.
- We travel to one of our members, the Province of Friesland in the Netherlands, for a two-day study visit.
- We organise an event aimed at advancing circular procurement as part of European Week of Regions and Cities.
- We speak at a conference on behavioural sciences and waste-resources policies organised by our member Brussels Environment.
- We speak at the conference "Quinzaine de l'Économie Circulaire" invited by our member Wallonia.
- We officially launch with our member Rijkswaterstaat the C-PRONE initiative, a 'one-stop shop' for everything happening in the realm of circular procurement.

NOVEMBER

- We publish an open letter to the newly elected Members of the European Parliament, advocating for an ambitious, holistic approach to advancing the EU's circular economy.
- We issue an open letter together with other organisations, urging EU and national policymakers to act swiftly in preventing a collapse of the used textile value chain.
- Over 12 700 waste reduction actions are carried out during EWWR 2024!
- We contribute to the European Parliament Intergroup conference on 'Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Sustainable Development' to outline its policy priorities.
- We become a member of the Urban Agenda Partnership on Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement, a strategic initiative under the Urban Agenda for the EU.
- We take part in the European Mission Soil Week with the SOILL project.
- We participate in the expert panel 'Towards Inclusive and Resilient Cities: Ecosystem and Waste Management for a Sustainable Future' in Bali, Indonesia, under the framework of the CRIC project.
- We organise a study visit to Florence (Italy) for members of the HOOP Network on the topic of biowaste collection in historical centres.

DECEMBER

- We strengthen ties with Turkey in support of local sustainability by welcoming a delegation from Bornova Municipality in Izmir.
- The DECISO project publishes a series of factsheets offering detailed insights into its circular economy initiatives across four pilot regions.
- The Local Alliance publishes a report raising alarm about the mismanagement risks of the Social Climate Fund (SCF), part of the EU's Green Deal.
- We release a report, under the CISUTAC project, providing local and regional authorities with a comprehensive overview of tools and strategies to enhance the circularity of textile materials.
- We participate in a Interreg Europe Policy Learning Platform webinar focused on the power of reuse.

THE NETWORK IN KEY NUMBERS

* THE NETWORK

Members **85**

Countries covered **23**

Although we are a network dedicated primarily to local and regional authorities, ACR+ welcomes all stakeholders having a role to play in the transition to circular economy. From decentralised authorities and city networks to NGOs, academics, private partners and consultancies. New members can join throughout the year.

WELCOME TO THE NETWORK



* OUR VISIBILITY AND IMPACT

Events where we spoke **45**

Open letters, position papers & press releases **11**

Alliances, platforms and coalitions joined **9**

Followers on LinkedIn **3717**

* SERVICES TO MEMBERS

Newsline (weekly newsletter) **41**

EU Digest **4**

News from members shared **211**

Requests from members answered **48**

SOME OF OUR DIRECT SERVICES TO MEMBERS THIS YEAR

* BRINGING EXPERTISE AND EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE TO MEMBERS' EVENTS

From the launch of the Irish waste plan and of the circular economy strategy of Region Centre Val de Loire to a conference on biowaste management in Romania or a presentation of EU panorama on waste management and upcoming policies during a general assembly, we spoke at more than 10 events upon invitation of our members.

* INVOLVING MEMBERS IN OUR ACTIVITIES

Not only we always try to involve at least one member in our projects - like Cleantech Bulgaria and Union of Albanian Municipalities joining the Circular Minds project - we also invite members to working groups, workshops (like Lisbon to the HOOP workshop in Porto, Odense to the CRIC conference), refer them as speakers (Connaght-Ulster Region joining the Waste in Progress congress). Without forgetting that we teamed up with Rijkswaterstaat to launch C-PRONE and facilitated a study visit in Friesland joined by Zero Waste Scotland and OVAM.

* ANSWERING QUESTIONS ON TOPICAL ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR OUR MEMBERS

We received over 15 request for information on topics as diverse as SUP implementation in Europe, solid refuse fuels, calculation rates of municipal waste recycling levels, EPR fees for WEEEs for exports, litter and fly-tipping prevention measures - just to name a few.

SUPPORT TO WASTE PLANS

Following our review of the Irish waste plan developed by the three regional authorities, we joined its launch. ACR+ also participated in a meeting of the steering committee of the regional waste plan of the Brussels Capital Region, region for whom we had analysed and commented the evaluation of the waste and resources plan. Earlier, we had presented the study on DRS in Belgium to the ministry of Environment of the same region.

CONTACT US



www.acrplus.org



[ACR+ | Association of
Cities and Regions for
sustainable Resource
management](#)

We are thankful to the ACR+ Supportive Members who, through their reinforced support, are helping us deliver all our activities.