

ACR+ WORK PROGRAMME 2025



ACR+

2025 – A year of EU engagement to advance circularity

After a pivotal year for Europe with the transition to a new College of Commissioners, 2025 brings its own challenges. Bold decisions alone will not be enough to embed sustainability at the core of EU policymaking. The first weeks of the year have already raised concerns about the future and the safeguarding of our collective ambition: achieving well-being for all, within planetary boundaries. This year will be crucial in shaping the direction of the EU, and we stand ready to meet the challenge.

Staying true to our vision of vibrant cities and regions where the economic and the ecological systems go hand in hand, we remain committed to position cities and regions as key actors in environmental and climate policies at all levels.

Our focus this year is on promoting this vision within the EU institutions, considering the new mandates established after the European elections, and on actively contributing to policy debates. We are dedicated to integrating sustainable resource use into upcoming legislation, including the Circular Economy Act and the revised Public Procurement Directives. **Our five thematic areas are gathering evidence, best practices, and technical insight to advance key topics for public authorities: public procurement, built environment, biomass, plastics, littering and fiscal schemes (PAYT), as well as waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE).**

At the same time, we will develop the two other directions: breaking down silos and pushing ACR+ members to develop a circular economy strategy. By doing so, we move closer to our goal of becoming the go-to resource for decentralised authorities striving to achieve and accelerate a just transition to a circular economy.



Promote our vision within the newly elected EU institutions and actively contribute to policy debates advocating to insert sustainable resource use in upcoming legislations

We are dedicated to shaping EU policies to achieve more ambitious goals and to advocating for the role and interests of decentralised authorities, in dialogue with European and international institutions. Building on the work carried out within each thematic area, as described in the following pages, we will reinforce our advocacy activities towards the renewed EU institutions.

Main activities:

- ➔ Answer to public consultations, building on the work developed in each thematic area as well as exchanges and feedback from members. The following consultations will be answered:
 - The Circular Economy Act (planned consultation);
 - Public Procurement Directives;
 - Consultation on bioeconomy (Towards a Circular, Regenerative and Competitive Bioeconomy);
 - Consultations on the Water Resilience Strategy.
- ➔ Participation in expert groups and ad-hoc working groups instigated by the EU institutions. These include, among others :
 - Zero Pollution Stakeholder Platform;
 - European Circular Economy Stakeholders Platform;
 - Informal expert group on waste;
 - DG GROW expert group on public procurement.
- ➔ Publication of position papers and open letters, as own initiatives or in cooperation with other organisations. The following files will be addressed (but not only):
 - Multilevel governance;
 - Competitiveness fund;
 - Multiannual Financial Framework.
- ➔ Organisation of events on topical issues gathering policy makers, practitioners and experts to inform the debate. A milestone will be our annual General Assembly on 10-12 June in Leeuwarden (NL) with our member Friesland Province.
- ➔ Regularly informing ACR+ members of EU updates relevant to their interests and the thematic area followed

Breaking down silos

We want to see more partnership between actors and sectors, we want to see our network flourish. Especially this year, we want to see many bridges being built between our members.

Main activities:

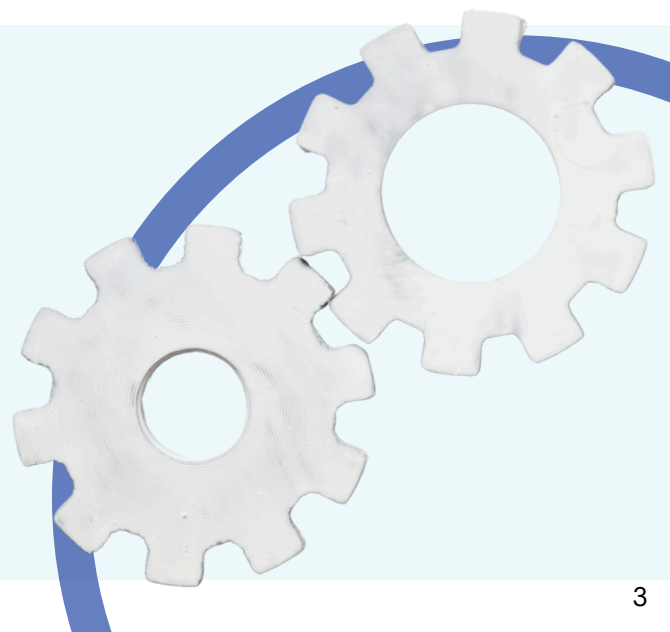
- Continuation of the cooperation started with several coalitions and alliances, support to various initiatives from other networks and organisations.
- Focus on the renewed [ACR+ website](#) and its members' area as key instruments to connect members.
- Dialogue between our [thematic areas](#) to capitalise on activities and results.
- Continuous implication in projects fostering multi-actor partnerships, and potential engagement of our members.

Encourage ACR+ members to develop a circular economy strategy

By 2030, we want to see 50% of members with or in the process of having a circular economy strategy. Through the activities of our thematic areas, we will support our members to build elements of this strategy. In a co-creation process with ACR+ members, we will develop a suite of concrete circular economy targets.


Main activities:

- Baseline study to identify members with or without a strategy.
- Identification of the needs of members without a strategy, the strength of those with a strategy.
- Establishment of a five-year plan, including actions within each thematic area, to support members and reach our objective.



Built Environment



Discover this thematic area 

Finalizing the structuring of this thematic area to enhance ACR+ expertise and support to members in this field through the mobilization of a strong group of ACR+ members active in the topic, fostering with them active exchange, learning and collaboration opportunities to answer their needs.

Mutual exchange of experiences on the following key aspects of circularity in the built environment already identified in 2024:

- Public procurement for construction projects
- Circular construction materials
- Construction demolition waste management

Activities:

- ➔ **Needs assessment:** Identify member's needs and gaps to set the working direction, inform future activities and opportunities, and provide relevant support to members.
- ➔ **Built Environment meet-up series:** Organise a series of online meetings for thematic area members to meet, connect with external experts and projects, and exchange experiences.
- ➔ **Inspiration from successful examples:** present initiatives/tools/projects to members. The outcomes will include a collection of shared good practices.
- ➔ **Facilitation and contribution to bilateral meetings within the INERTWASTE project** as well as sharing and enhancing the lessons learnt of the project
- ➔ **Participation in relevant events** to increase ACR+'s expertise on the topic
- ➔ **Join the Buy Better to Build Better Coalition** to promote Green Public Procurement as a strategic tool to create lead markets for sustainable and innovative solutions in the construction sector.

Relevant project:



Sustainable Food Systems



[Discover this thematic area](#)



Support systemic change towards sustainable and resilient food systems by enhancing understanding of impact of production systems, promoting sustainable organic waste management, improving decision-making for nutrient pollution prevention, closing the gap between organic waste (resources) and organic input for agricultural production.

Activities:

- ➔ **Improve the performance of European food systems by promoting a wider understanding of the implications of generating food losses at primary production level:**
 - Implementation of the FOLOU Twinning Regions Programme: Launch and implement the first activities of the FOLOU Twinning Regions programme. This programme will support regional and local actors to increase understanding of food losses generation and quantification tools. Additionally, twinning regions will identify and work towards priority action areas to tackle the food loss quantification challenge.
- ➔ **Support to the objectives of the EU Mission Soil and EU Mission Oceans and Water:**
 - **SOIL - Dissemination of the Prepsoil project's results:** Actively support the dissemination of the results and key findings of the Prepsoil project, which concludes in mid-2025. Dissemination activities will include a final event in Brussels (May) where connections will be made with the EU Soil Monitoring Law and its adoption at sub-regional level. Actors at regional and sub-regional level – especially from ACR+ members – will be invited to engage and follow-up to address soil health matters;
 - **SOIL - Reinforce the engagement in activities supporting the establishment of 100 Soil Health Living Labs** through the SOILL Start-up project. Nudging of ACR+ members in addressing soil health concerns in their territories, and supporting the establishment of Soil Health living Labs, and their participation in EU-funded projects

Sustainable Food Systems

- **SOIL and WATER – Development of a Decision Support Tool for reducing nutrients pollution of soil and water systems:** start the design of a Decision Support Tool (DST) to assist public administrations and decision-makers in selecting appropriate Technological and Nature-Based Solutions (NBS) to address water and soil pollution from nitrates in agriculture. This DST will:
 1. Evaluate the efficiency of a range of technological and NBS options for tackling nutrient pollution;
 2. Enable public administrations to make informed decisions by providing clear criteria and comparative assessments of different solutions.
 3. Support the selection of solutions that are best suited to specific local contexts and needs, promoting effective implementation of pollution prevention measures;



SOILS and WATER – Governance analysis for nutrient pollution prevention:

Conduct a comprehensive governance analysis to understand the decision-making processes related to nutrient pollution prevention in soil and water systems. This analysis will aim to:

- **Identify decision-making mechanisms:** Map out existing mechanisms and governance structures that influence decisions related to nutrient pollution prevention at the local scale
- **Assess process effectiveness:** Evaluate the effectiveness of these mechanisms in achieving impactful pollution prevention outcomes.
- **Recommend process improvements:** Identify potential improvements and innovative approaches to strengthen decision-making processes for greater impact on nutrient pollution prevention in agriculture.



WATER – Exploration of Water Resilience activities: Explore potential new activities focused on improving resilience in water management within food systems and beyond, aligning with the EU Water Resilience strategy.

Relevant projects:



Policy and Governance



[Discover this thematic area](#)



In close collaboration with the other thematic areas, increase ACR+ policy input through responding to public and expert consultations on key policy developments, including the Circular Economy Act and Public Procurement Directives, ensuring ACR+ has a consolidated position on these topics.

Provide useful insights and information to the ACR+ members, acquired through projects by publishing reports, organising webinars and other activities. This year's focus is in-line with the EU level developments putting forward industrial innovation, competitiveness and sustainability of the industries.

Activities:

- ➔ **LIFE4EPR project implementation and EPR Club engagement:** Launch and actively implement the LIFE4EPR project, focusing on its key objectives:
 - **Mapping and analysis of EU EPR schemes:** Conduct a mapping and analysis of existing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes across the EU, and to engage with various stakeholders in different countries and sectors. This process of data collection and analysis would bring together organisations who might not typically interact, facilitating information sharing and potentially identifying common challenges and solutions across different contexts.
 - **EPR Club collaboration:** Actively engage and collaborate with the EPR Club, leveraging its network and expertise to support the LIFE4EPR project activities and disseminating project findings. It is expected that the EPR club will organise joint activities, fostering synergy and maximising impact.

Policy and Governance

- ➔ **Keep the EPR Club engaged in and up to date on current policy debates:** The EPR Club will actively engage in analysing existing and emerging EPR schemes, including those related to the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive. It will also discuss the potential of EPR schemes within the upcoming Circular Economy Act, as well as explore complementary instruments to achieve circular economy, such as eco-design, to inform policy making. With its work, the EPR club will also aim to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement in EPR schemes across Europe. The club will also address critical aspects such as littering costs, WEEE collection targets, and the integration of re-use and repair activities within EPR frameworks.
- ➔ **Dissemination of the results from policy research on the topic of industrial symbiosis (IS):** Actively disseminate the findings and recommendations from the on-going research on IS focusing on the governance aspects This will include:

 - **Exploring Governance Strategies to Facilitate Industrial Symbiosis Report:** Publish and promote the results of this report, highlighting key governance strategies for successful IS implementation.
 - **Report on Policy Analysis of High-Potential Regions for Industrial Symbiosis:** publish report and organise a webinar to present and discuss the findings of this report, focusing on policy recommendations for regions with high IS potential.
- ➔ **Strategic engagement on public procurement policy:** The thematic area will strategically engage in public procurement policy at the EU level focusing on:

 - **Stakeholder Expert Group on Public Procurement engagement and directives revision:** Actively positioning ACR+ in the European Commission Stakeholder Expert Group on Public Procurement (SEGPP) to contribute to the revision of the Public Procurement Directives and create new contacts and opportunities.
 - **Leveraging C-PRONE:** Establishing C-PRONE as a gateway on circular procurement. Actively engaging core members to identify and address key topics of interest, fostering knowledge exchange, sharing of good practices, and giving access to a wide community of experts.
 - **Strengthening public procurement:** Capitalising on the momentum of the Public Procurement Directives revision to strengthen public procurement as a key instrument to achieve sustainability objectives and amplify this message.

Policy and Governance

- ➔ **Cost of Litter Management:** Finalise and publish the on-going work on the costs of litter management and engage with the interested members, as well as disseminate the results.

Relevant projects:



Circular Lifestyles



[Discover this thematic area](#)



Enhance members understanding of how sustainable production and consumption are linked and how can they support circular economy principles by addressing key policies and strategies of interest and providing insight on their deployment. Uptake among citizens and consumers will be facilitated through behaviour assessment and valorisation, cross-sectoral cooperation between stakeholders, identification of relevant intervention areas and rethinking product placing, marketing, and other important processes and operations – in households, as well as tourism, sports, culture and other industries.

Activities:

- ➔ **Behaviour and sustainable consumption webinar series:** Organise a series of webinars focused on understanding the challenges in supply chains, product placing and addressing behaviour change as an approach to sustainable consumption and resource management. This webinar series will:
 - Provide insight in behaviour assessment and valorisation as an approach to policy making and deployment and reinforcement of their uptake among consumers and population in general.
 - Showcase successful initiatives, either as case studies and examples of successful initiatives from ACR+ members and beyond that have effectively applied such an approach
 - Address key bottlenecks and barriers that prevent a more sustainable and circular production of goods and services and their market placement, including their penetration into processes and operations in tourism, sports, culture and other industries

Circular Lifestyles

➔ **Study visits, exchanges of good practices and research that enable evidence-based policy making, providing support and insights in social acceptance, habits, behaviour patterns and their valorisation and capitalisation.** Facilitate visits, exchanges and research among ACR+ members through European projects and initiatives, targeting various operations and processes, target groups among the population, as well as waste streams of interest (textile, bioproducts, plastics and more) to effectively valorise behavioural insights, address bottlenecks, build a knowledge base of successful initiatives and strengthen circular economy policies at the local and regional level. This activity will:

- Gather and showcase members' experiences and efforts, as well as provide support tools and examples to members through a dedicated Behaviour Intelligence Hub
- Peer-to-peer learnings to enhance policy making that would put cleaner production, sustainable consumption, waste prevention and more into the spotlight, while ensuring their appropriate deployment and uptake among the population
- Collaboration with businesses (SMEs, service providers, markets) and various industries (tourism, sports, culture), as well as public authorities and agencies relevant for those industries and destinations to rethink processes and operations and apply cross-sectoral collaboration

➔ **2025 Campaign focusing on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE):** The thematic area will actively promote and support member's participation in the 2025 edition of the European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR), as the European Secretariat. Themed around WEEE, the EWWR 2025 campaign will:

- emphasise the rapidly growing nature of the WEEE waste stream, underscoring the significant environmental and health hazards it poses due to the presence of hazardous materials and the sheer volume of electronic waste generated.
- actively encourage individuals, businesses, and policymakers to rethink their relationship with electronic devices, fostering responsible consumer behaviour in their use, maintenance, and disposal.

Relevant projects:



Waste and Material Flows



[Discover this thematic area](#)



Enhance knowledge exchange within the ACR+ community on key Waste and Materials Flow topics by organising and promoting participation in a series of events (HOOP Study Visit, Hazards Out series of webinars, HOOP & BIOBEST Final Conferences), sharing technical publication on different aspects of waste management, achieving significant participation across all events, with strong representation from ACR+ members, and better understanding current needs when it comes to waste strategies and management. Supporting ACR+ members with the implementation and improvement of waste management for the fractions with new European sorting obligations: bio-waste, textiles, hazardous waste.

Main activities:

- ➔ **Organising events for knowledge exchange and network building:** The thematic area expects to organise and promote participation in a series of events including study visits, webinars, and conferences focused on key thematic priorities like biowaste valorisation and hazardous waste management. These events will serve as platforms to:
 - **Facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue:** Bring together ACR+ members with diverse expertise, alongside external experts, industry representatives, and policymakers to foster dialogue and exchange perspectives on specific challenges and solutions within waste and material flows.
 - **Showcase innovation and best practices:** Disseminate knowledge and highlight best practices emerging from EU-funded projects ([HOOP](#), [LIFE BIOBEST](#), [CISUTAC](#)) and leading organisations, promoting the uptake of innovative approaches.

Waste and Material Flows

- **Build partnerships and collaboration:** Actively encourage networking and collaboration amongst participants during events, fostering new partnerships and strengthening existing relationships between ACR+ members and external stakeholders.
- ➔ **Publication of key reports:** The thematic area will publish and disseminate a series of key reports in 2025:
- Report on the findings of the "More Circularity, Less Carbon" campaign, providing insights into the link between municipal waste management and carbon emissions and showcasing effective mitigation strategies implemented by ACR+ members.
 - A cross-analysis of underground container implementation in dense European cities, evaluating their impact and questioning the role of collection methods in efficient urban waste management.
 - An in-depth documentation and analysis of social Pay-As-You-Throw (PAYT) schemes implemented in large European cities, examining their design features and impact on performance, compliance, and costs.
- ➔ **Hazards Out initiative workshops on mandatory separate collection of hazardous waste:** In partnership with FEAD, Hazardous Waste Europe, and NOWMORE, the "Hazards Out" initiative, will implement a series of workshops specifically designed to support the transition to mandatory separate collection of household hazardous waste (HHW), which became a requirement for EU Member States in January 2025.
- ➔ **Sleep Circular partnership on mattress circularity:** participation in the initiative led by FEAD on the collection and recycling of end-of-life mattresses aiming to keep the end-of-life mattresses out of the landfill and incinerators and address the low recycling rates of end-of-life mattresses in the EU. Several webinars will take place during the year.

Participation to the informal expert group on waste of the European Commission

Relevant projects:



About us: an international network with a common goal

The **Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management** (ACR+) is an international network of cities and regions sharing the aim of promoting a sustainable resource management and accelerating the transition towards a circular economy on their territories and beyond.

Our vision, "No sustainable future without a just, sufficient, and circular transition", envisions thriving cities and regions where economic growth and environmental well-being go hand in hand. This is achieved through fair resource distribution and access to public services, benefiting both people and the planet.

ACR+ recognises the key role of cities and regions in driving sustainability, leveraging their proximity to communities and businesses to foster partnerships and impactful change.

By 2030, ACR+ aims to be the leading resource hub for local authorities committed to a just circular transition, breaking silos and enhancing cross-sector collaboration.

- * 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



CONTACT US



www.acrplus.org



ACR+ | Association of
Cities and Regions for
sustainable Resource
management

