VOL. 03
June 2024

FEAD MAGAZINE

UNLOCKING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY'S POTENTIAL

EU 2024 ELECTIONS

WASTE MANAGEMENT EUROPE

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European Waste Management Association

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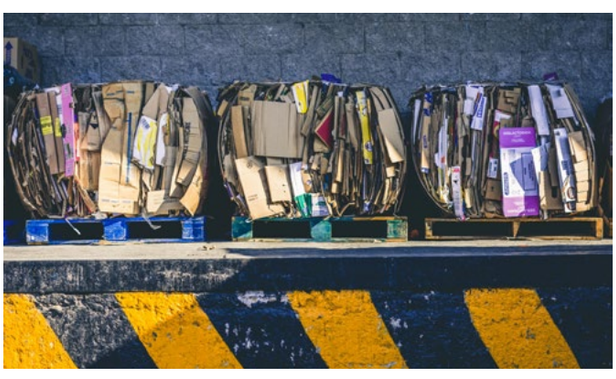

Foreword by Paolo Campanella

FEAD Secretary General

Following the pivotal 2024 European elections, it is an opportune moment for the waste management sector to reflect on its current state and strategise for the future. Elections are a crucial period for policy reassessment and renewal, making it an ideal time for our sector to align our goals with the broader objectives of the European Union. At FEAD, we have embraced this moment of introspection and forward-thinking by evaluating our practices, challenges, and opportunities.

During the last 12 months, we have taken significant steps to outline our future direction and commitments through the publication of our Vision for 2030 and our Manifesto. These documents represent not only our aspirations but also our concrete pledges to support the EU in achieving its ambitious targets for a sustainable and circular economy.

Our Vision for 2030 charts our strategic priorities and actions for the next decade. It underscores our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and collaboration across the waste management industry. We believe that by fostering a circular economy, we can contribute substantially to reducing waste, conserving resources, and mitigating climate change. Our vision is to transform waste into valuable resources, creating a sustainable loop that benefits both the environment and the economy.

The Manifesto complements this vision by detailing some of our policy positions and advocacy efforts. It serves as a call to action for policymakers, industry stakeholders, and the public to support and implement measures that promote circularity and sustainability. In the Manifesto, we highlight the importance of coherent and supportive regulatory frameworks, investment in advanced waste treatment technologies, and the integration of circular economy principles into all aspects of policy and practice.

We firmly believe that our sector can play an important role in achieving its circular economy goals. The transition to a circular economy is not just a regulatory requirement but a necessary evolution for the well-being of our planet and future generations. By embracing these principles, we aim to lead by example and drive the transformation needed for a sustainable future.

As we look to the future, we invite all stakeholders to join us in this journey. Together, we can achieve a more sustainable, resource-efficient, and resilient Europe. The 2024 elections provide a unique opportunity to reaffirm our commitments and accelerate our progress towards a greener future. Let's seize this moment to make lasting change.

FEAD is the European Waste Management Association, representing the private waste and resource management industry across Europe, including 19 national waste management federations and 3,000 waste management companies. Private waste management companies operate in 60% of municipal waste markets in Europe and in 75% of industrial and commercial waste. This means more than 320,000 local jobs, fuelling €5 billion of investments into the economy every year.


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EU Elections 2024 and FEAD's manifesto for a sustainable circular economy

The recent EU elections have concluded, and the results are in. Citizens of the European Union have elected the new Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) who will represent their interests and concerns during the 2024-2029 term. With this fresh mandate, there is a renewed sense of determination to tackle pressing issues such as climate change, sustainability, and the circular economy.

FEAD Team

Election results and new mandates

The election results reflect a shift to the right in the political landscape of the European Union. The European People's Party (EPP) remains the largest party with 26% of the votes, securing 188 seats, 12 more compared to 2019. Following closely is the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) with 19% and 136 seats; they lost 2 seats. The Renew Europe Group (RE) garnered 11%, translating to 75 seats (25 seats lost), while the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) received 7% with 54 seats (17 seats were lost). Other notable parties include the Identity and Democracy Group (ID) with 8% and 58 seats (9 seats were gained), and the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) with 10% and 83 seats; 14 seats were gained. The Left group now has 39 seats and holds 5%, gaining two seats from 2019.

FEAD's Commitment to a circular economy

As always, FEAD is ready to collaborate with the newly elected MEPs. We remain steadfast in our commitment to supporting the European Union's ambitious goals for achieving a circular economy. In anticipation of the elections, we published our manifesto, emphasising the need for a European Industrial Deal to be a priority for the next term of the European Institutions. This deal is crucial for making Europe's industry sustainable, competitive, and circular.

'FEAD is ready to work collaboratively towards achieving a sustainable, competitive, and circular economy.'

Our Vision for a Sustainable, Competitive, and Circular Industry

Our vision aligns with the ambitious climate objectives outlined in the Green Deal.

- By fostering sustainability, we can ensure that our industrial activities contribute positively to the environment, reducing carbon emissions and promoting renewable energy sources.
- Competitive: A robust and competitive manufacturing base in Europe is essential for economic growth and innovation. Supporting local industries will not only create jobs but also reduce dependence on external resources, enhancing the EU's economic resilience.
- Circular: Transitioning to a circular economy is vital for the efficient use of resources. By shifting Europe's material use towards recycled materials sourced and processed within the continent, we can reduce waste and promote sustainable production practices.

Secondary raw material © Copyright Free

The role of waste management in the circular economy

Waste management is a critical component of the circular economy. It operates across all product categories, managing waste from households, industries, commerce, construction, and demolition, as well as hazardous waste.

As an industrial sector, waste management provides essential services that ensure our environments are safe, clean, and hygienic, enabling other sectors to function effectively.

Moreover, waste management is a strategic asset for industrial production, supplying secondary raw materials and energy. Establishing a circular economy requires the return of substantial quantities of high-quality secondary raw materials to productive use. However, the uptake of these materials into the economy necessitates more than just efficient waste management practices. It requires a consistent demand for recycled materials that meet the quality standards and competitive pricing of virgin materials—prices that currently do not fully account for the life cycle impacts of virgin material use.

Call for a Circular Material Use Act

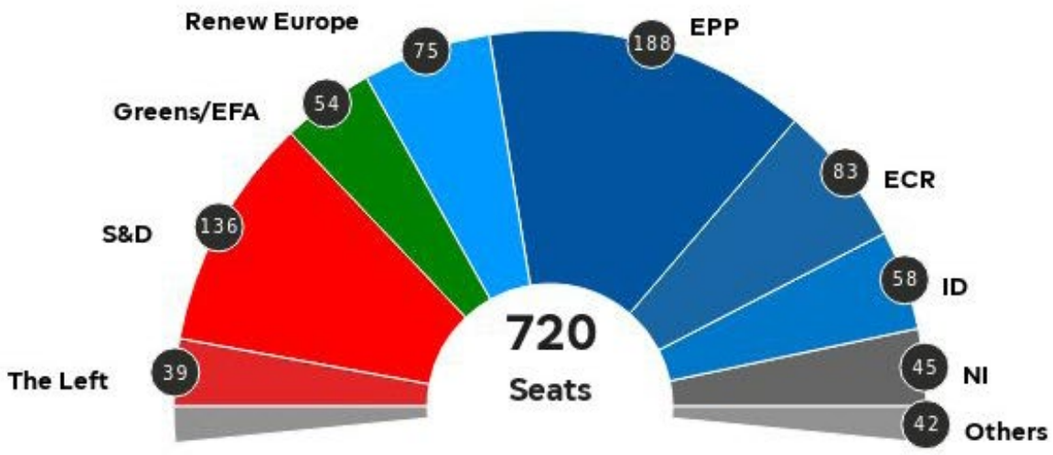
To address this challenge, FEAD calls for the implementation of a Circular Material Use Act (CMUA). This act would provide a comprehensive policy framework encompassing waste management and the transformation of waste materials into productive resources for industrial production. The CMUA would ensure that the demand for recycled materials is sustained, promoting their integration into the economy and reducing reliance on virgin materials.

A new era for the Parliament

A new mandate for EU institutions generally mark the beginning of a new era for the European Parliament. As we welcome the newly elected MEPs, FEAD is ready to work collaboratively towards achieving a sustainable, competitive and circular economy. By prioritising the European Industrial and implementing a Circular Material Use Act, we can ensure that Europe leads the global effort in sustainability and resource efficiency.

European Parliament 2024-2029

Provisional results



Political groups in the European Parliament	Number of seats	% of seats
EPP – Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)	188	26.11%
S&D – Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament	136	18.89%
ECR – European Conservatives and Reformists Group	83	11.53%
Renew Europe – Renew Europe Group	75	10.42%
ID – Identity and Democracy Group	58	8.06%
Greens/EFA – Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance	54	7.50%
The Left – The Left group in the European Parliament – GUE/NGL	39	5.42%
NI – Non-attached Members	45	6.25%
Others – Newly elected Members not allied to any of the political groups set up in the outgoing Parliament	42	5.83%

According to Parliament's rules of procedure, a political group shall consist of at least 23 Members elected in at least seven Member States.

European Parliament © Copyright Free

Recycling activities' contribution to decarbonisation

In the context of actions for the environmental transition, decarbonisation is one of the pillars on which European Union policies are based.

We must increase our awareness of the important contribution to decarbonization the circular economy and recycling activities already have on Europe's targets.

A recent Publication of the JRC[1] quantifies the environmental advantages of the mechanical recycling of plastic waste in both the different scenarios evaluated:

- compared to the alternative of incinerating or to dispose such waste to landfill ('system' waste management perspective); or
- compared to the alternative of using recycled polymers versus equivalent virgin polymers ('product' perspective).

In the first scenario analysed, the recycling of an additional ton of plastic as an alternative to waste-to-energy and disposal brings climate change mitigation benefits quantified on average in 1.9 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per ton of recycled plastic waste.

On the other hand, the savings achievable with the use of Secondary Raw Materials - compared to virgin materials - range between 0.1 and 1.5 tonnes of CO_2 equivalent per tonne of plastic waste, depending on the type of plastic analysed, with an average saving of around 0.5 tons of CO_2 equivalent per ton of recycled polymer (for further details, please refer to the JRC study referred to above).

One topic is the production of virgin plastic, another one is the recycling of plastic waste.

Even if there is a connection between the two activities since the more plastic is produced, the more plastic waste is generated, they must be considered as two different activities as

Barbara Barbarisi
Head of New Projects, Innovation and Sustainability of Montello S.p.A

producing plastic products does not necessary means that the relative generated plastic waste will be recycled.

The environmental advantages reached by recycling activities should have already been recognised to recyclers, for example in terms of 'price premium', but unfortunately this has not been the case. On the contrary, up to now, the plastic recycling sector has been evolving due to the fact that recycled products have cost less than virgin products.

However, nowadays the European mechanical plastic recycling sector is currently in serious difficulty, especially due to the importation of extremely cheap virgin plastic from Middle Eastern countries which could lead, in the short to medium term, to the definitive closure of many European recycling industries, also losing, at the same time, the significative environmental benefits of these activities.

Therefore, a specific regulatory framework is essential in order to recognize and consequently not to lose the important contribution that the recycling sector has been providing to Europe in terms of decarbonisation. A proposal could be a specific European Regulation on that topic, considering that the European Commission and Council are evaluating a framework for the standardization of carbon credits validation methodologies. The recent Carbon Removal Certification

1 *Tonini, D., Garcia-Gutierrez, P., and Nessi, S., 'Environmental effects of plastic waste recycling', EUR 30668 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2021, JRC122455*

Framework will concern, in particular, methodologies for offsetting 'permanent' emissions, i.e. through carbon capture and storage systems and technologies for the direct removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The idea could be including the production of End of Waste among the certifiable activities, recognising 'carbon credit' to recycling activities depending on their saving of CO_2 equivalent.

In order to give a stronger structure to the proposed system, it could, for example, be imposed that CO_2 equivalent savings must be certified through a product Carbon Footprint study verified by third party according to specific standards (i.e. ISO standards). The recognized carbon credits could then be exchanged and/or used by the recyclers to offset Emission Trading obligations.

In summary, recycling activities should be encouraged as 'best practice' of circular economy, recognizing their value as it has already been done with other activities, for example with the production of biomethane. In fact, these two different activities have in common the fact that they both can allow significant 'saving' of CO_2eq. emissions representing, in the same time in the hierarchy scale, a better option to other forms of waste management (i.e.: incineration and/or landfill disposal).

The recognition of carbon credits to recycling activities would reach, among others, the following goals:

- avoidance of the loss of the environmental benefits already achieved by recycling activities in term of CO_2eq. saving;
- contribution to the European's climate neutrality target by saving GHG emissions;
- maximization of circularity, accelerating the evolution of the recycling activities;
- insurance that recyclers can count on a reliable framework for their investments.

The proposed mechanism could be extended, in addition to plastic recycle, to all the recycling activities providing that they can allow a CO_2 equivalent savings compared to the correspondent virgin productions or to the waste to energy and landfill disposal alternatives.

Recycling plant © Copyright Free

Portugal's sustainability challenges and CÍRCULO's work

círculo*

Ricardo Vidal,
President of the board of
Associação Circulo

The Portuguese Association, Circulo - Association for the Circularity of Special Waste, was set up with the main objective of actively contributing to the improvement of the efficiency of the waste sector, helping the country to fulfil the European Union's targets and proposing future measures aimed at improving the treatment of special waste.

We are the only Portuguese organisation to be a member of FEAD, which we joined in recognition of its importance. The association's priority is the Special Waste Agenda, the promotion of the circular economy and ensuring strict segregation of hazardous waste, protecting the environment and public health.

Waste management in Portugal faces significant challenges that require urgent action. The mobilisation of institutions and legislators is crucial, as is the active collaboration of political agents, market operators and civil society. Only through joint effort will it be possible to achieve a more efficient and sustainable waste management system.

Let's look at some indicators: the latest review of Portuguese environmental policy, the 'Environmental Implementation Review 2022' (a reporting tool designed to improve the implementation of EU environmental laws and policies) was carried out by the European Commission and shows that the performance of the circular economy and waste management in Portugal is well below the European Union average and that there is a growing and significant number of cases of non-compliance and infringements of European legislation against Portugal. On the other hand, the circular (secondary) use of materials in Portugal was 2.4% in 2014 and fell to 2.2% in 2020, when the European average is 12.8%. The European Court of Auditors concluded that we are the fourth country in the EU with the least circular economy and that the waste sector in Portugal contributed to 9 % of greenhouse gas emissions, which is three times more than the European standard. INE's Environment Statistics from 2022, released this April, state that in 2022 all specific waste streams will see a decrease in the ratio of recovered waste.

Here are some examples of Portugal's situation regarding the management of some specific waste streams:

- Construction and demolition waste (CDW) makes up more than 1/3 of the total waste produced in the EU and when not segregated at source, CDW can contain critical substances such as solvents and asbestos. In the EU, recycling and material recovery rates vary from less than 10 per cent to more than 90 per cent. Portugal is the third worst performing member state according to Eurostat data;
- End-of-Life Vehicles (ELV) sector, the management body responsible for this sector has for the last two years failed to meet the national reuse/recovery target (95%) for ELVs set out.
- and EU legislation. There are also problems with the segregation and treatment of special and hazardous waste, such as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).
- Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment, Portugal has repeatedly failed to meet its targets: the recycling rate achieved in 2021 by the organisations managing this waste stream stood at 14.5%, the same as in 2020, when the legal target is 65%.

Portugal is facing major sustainability challenges.

For example, the compliance with the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) Regulation. Portugal is obliged to ensure the proper management of waste containing or contaminated by POPs in facilities capable of segregating the waste in such a way that the POPs content is destroyed or irretrievably transformed.

CIRCULO intends to play an active role in the national waste management agenda, considering

that this waste stream can create economic value, respond to the challenges of Industry 5.0 as a key driver in the economic and societal transition and lead the digital, energy and green transition.

This innovative approach offers solutions to the problems faced in waste management in Portugal, allowing the transformation of these materials into valuable resources and contributing to a more sustainable and resilient future.

CIRCULO also aims to be a leading partner in the management of special waste, collaborating with the government, NGOs, national and international organisations and political players.

Secretary of State for International Trade and Foreign Investment Bernardo Ivo Cruz, visiting ECO-OIL's facilities on 2 February 2024 © Círculo

Demolition waste © Copyright Free

People at the core of the circular economy

Ecological transition is all the more social

Renewable energy, recycling, waste and water treatment are key to the circular economy. While the green potential of circular models is clear, less attention has been paid to their human impacts. These activities are local and human based; people are the heart of our businesses. Transitioning to a circular economy means a path to different ways of thinking, working, and living. This upcoming new world, to which FEAD vision 2030 is our guideline, calls for a new kind of relationship within and out of companies.

David Lamy,
Director-General of Recycling and Recover SUEZ

Our people, our future

We all defend one principle: health & safety. We want our employees and subcontractors to get back home safe every day. Progresses have been made, frequency and severity rates are at their lowest.

Working conditions have improved, especially in waste collection and sorting.

But there is still much to be done.

What's next? Working on painful jobs might result in enhanced human, with exoskeletons, chips. Virtual reality is already part of training programs. What do we expect from the metaverse? Will artificial intelligence have its part? Surely yes! How? We're only at the beginning. In terms of security and working conditions, AI will help us anticipate hazardous situations, prevent risks and accidents.

© *SUEZ*

Attract and retain talent

People and companies have strong adaptation abilities, especially in crisis periods; Covid has proved it. Remote working has spread among white collar workers at an unexpected speed. It brings more flexibility and saves time.

Though we still have face to face meetings and remember the importance of coffee breaks, long distance journeys are no longer a preference. It is not only a matter of personal organisation but above all fatigue, road risk, stress.

This post Covid era also demonstrates that concerns have shifted, and professional-personal life balance is more prevalent, especially for younger workers but not only. Expectations regarding employers and managers have increased. In a dynamic employment market, attracting and retaining talents have become issues.

‘I believe in the power of ecosystems. Organisations, teams, partners, together we can succeed in reinforcing our businesses’ sustainability and desirability.’

Environmental commitments are at stake: the climate, biodiversity, pollution. Our core activities are genuinely attractive for what we do for the circular economy. What we are asked is how we do it. European taxonomy and CSRD can be seen as opportunities to promote our companies to professionals, as are extra-financial ratings.

In this context, our companies must transform to include social topics. Inclusion is key: the gender gap, senior workers, disabled people, the LGBT+ community, and more, we need to move forward and act to be a socially dynamic sector. Female positions have increased but not in all jobs. On the field they are still under-represented. Mixed collection teams are still uncommon. Professional integration is another key. Long term unemployed people find in the waste activities opportunities to go back to an active professional life. Trainees, graduates with no or little experience are complementary to seniors in our search for industrial excellence and professionalism.

Attractiveness is also what our teams report about their jobs. Thanks to recent innovations and technologies, our contribution to circularity and the environment, our employees have a sense of pride, efficiency, and usefulness to the common good. Teamwork counts in job interest.

Upskilling and reskilling training in the circular economy

Our future and that of our teams are intimately linked to new jobs. But how do we prepare for something we don’t know? We collectively need to be flexible, anticipate and work together. We can learn together, explore, and get inspired by those who have already changed models.

Let’s not miss the boat. To rapidly upskill the current workforce to meet the requirements of circular activities, training must be adapted at the right level. This is particularly relevant for activities at the top of the waste hierarchy such as repair, re-use, and preparation for re-use.

Manual skills are needed for tasks that rely on human judgment and experience. Circular skills also allow individuals to identify the characteristics, function, and value of an item or material, so they can adjust it for different purposes or modify it to extend its lifespan.

To implement the circular economy successfully, it is necessary to improve the required skills, through training and work integration programs.

In accordance with the European Pillar of Social Rights, everyone has the right to quality, which is why we need inclusive training to acquire skills and manage transitions in the labour market.

Partnerships, social economy

Our social transition is also a matter of ecosystems. Circular economy gathers many different actors, of various sizes and profiles: associations, companies, institutions and the public. The social economy play san inevitable part in the creation and running of circular loops. The circular economy value chain is full of partnerships, creating social value thanks to interactions between organisations that are complementary. It creates jobs, develops the local economy, with positive repercussions on local populations.

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Latvia's chance to solve environmental problems – recovery of waste

Latvia plans to build a modern waste-to-energy plant that will produce 530 gigawatt hours of energy from 143,000 tons of waste that cannot be used elsewhere. The plant will be located in an industrial area on the outskirts of the capital Riga.

Latvia is one of the only country in the European Union where waste is not used as a resource, with an average of 380,000 tons (43.5 percent) of household waste generated each year deposited in landfills. Compared to the EU, where waste is used as fuel in 6 percent of all resources used for the generation of heat, the figure for Latvia is 0 percent.

This failure to implement a timely waste minimisation strategy on the national level has led to the near exhaustion of the existing landfill capacity. In 2022, households in Latvia generated 871,000 tons of household waste, of which 51 percent were recycled or composted and 3 percent were used for energy in the cement industry; the rest simply cause environmental damage by being deposited in landfills.

Latvia's climate - cold winters - creates the need for heat. Historically, it has been generated using natural gas or wood. However, Russia's war in Ukraine and rising timber prices are forcing the search for alternative fuels. That is why Vides Resursu Centrs (VRC), the operator of the largest waste sorting plant in the Baltics and a subsidiary of CleanR Grupa, has started work on a modern waste-to-energy plant project to further develop its operations.

While waste regeneration is no longer a novelty in Europe, the project is a completely new industry in Latvia and therefore faces many challenges. In order to adopt the best international examples, the Finnish company AFRY, a leader in the field, has been engaged as a technology and safety partner for the project. AFRY has participated in 130 different waste-to-energy projects worldwide, with a total production capacity of 20 million tons per year.

In Latvia, waste regeneration, as an undeveloped sector, faces a lack of understanding from the part of experts, decision-makers and the public. There is a lack of regulations and laws appropriate for the technology.

LASUA– Latvian Association of Waste Management

The national energy plans do not include potential waste recovery capacities, as there are no appropriate plants. The planned VRC plant will be among the first ones in Latvia, with two other small-scale recovery plants in development stage.

The project developers are doing a lot of explanatory work with residents, municipalities and the State, and are involved in improving the legislation to ensure that the documents improving waste sorting, energy and climate include the technology, which addresses a range of issues of national importance by using an undervalued local resource.

The new waste-to-energy plant will reduce the volume of waste deposited in landfills and help Latvia move towards the EU Landfill Directive target of reducing the share of deposited household waste to 10 percent of the annually generated household waste by 2035. Latvia's energy independence will be boosted, saving 48 million cubic meters of gas and 661,000 cubic meters of woodchips. The climate issue will also be addressed: compared to landfills, regeneration ensures less CO_2 emissions. Importantly, regenerating 30 percent of waste will postpone the need for new landfills.

Thanks to the latest technologies, an environmentally friendly waste recycling process will be implemented. The energy from the regeneration process will provide heat for 100,000 residents of the capital Riga, while the electricity will be supplied to 50,000 households. The technological process is virtually residue-free, as 98 percent of the ash produced will also be returned to the circular economy - in road building or construction.

The project has ambitious goals to develop the industrial area and make it accessible to people.

Visual representation of the planned waste-to-energy plant in Latvia © LASUA

The waste-to-energy plant in Latvia is projected to be an innovative building in its field, with modern technologies, increased safety requirements, as well as a socially responsible and caring attitude towards the environment and open to the public.

The plant's building will also serve as a tourist infrastructure and recreational facility for the local population. The project is being implemented in an industrial area as an open-access neighborhood for residents and visitors, and a safe environment for people, animals, and plants. The project will mark a vision for a new industrial concept in Latvia - a public building in an urban environment.

In collaboration with the Botanical Garden of the University of Latvia, a Plant House will be created on the site of the plant, combining education, research and recreation opportunities. A skatepark will be open to athletes throughout the year, the design of which will be led by Red Bull ambassador and two-time winner of the title of Europe's best skater, Madars Apse and his Latvian skateboarding team. There are also plans to illuminate the running and skiing track, to provide free electric car charging stations for residents, and to install solar panels on the roof of the building.

The total investment for the regeneration plant project is almost 170 million euros, which will be covered by private financing, without any State, municipal or European funding. Since 2023, the work has been underway in cooperation with the international audit firm KPMG to attract investors experienced in the regeneration sector.

Project facts and figures:

- 60.5 MW input capacity
- 45 MW heating energy transmitted into networks
- 16 MW electric power generation capacity
- 530,800 MWh total energy generated in a year
- 404,000 MWh heating energy generated in a year
- 126,800 MWh electric power generated in a year
- Industrial territory
- 100,000 residents supplied with heating
- 50,000 households supplied with electricity
- Natural gas consumption reduced by 4 percent
- Volume of waste deposited in landfills reduced by 143,000 tons
- 20 new jobs
- ~ EUR 10,000,000 in tax revenue to the state and municipality in a year
- Location with shorter transportation route, without crossing densely populated areas
- Connection to centralized heating network and high voltage power network
- New development of the sector
- Investment in science and innovations

Latvia's way to implementing a textile waste management system: learning from experience

A few years ago, the European Union (EU) set a target for its member states, requiring them to introduce a separate collection system for textiles by 2025. While only a small number of EU countries have such a system in place so far, France being one example, we began exploring ways to introduce one in Latvia as far back as 2019.

So, looking at a few examples from around the world, we took steps to learn how to do this at local level from scratch. Compared to the EU's other members, Latvia is a small country; nevertheless, the amount of textiles brought to the market here every year is relatively high, totalling some 27,000 tonnes. These products account for 3–5% of all waste disposed of in landfills. With the EU's requirement to significantly reduce the amount of waste going to landfills by 2035, textiles are an important part of the waste that can be managed, returned into circulation, and recycled.

Jānis Aizbalts, 'Eco Baltia vide' Chairman of the Management Board, Latvian Association of Waste Management Companies board member

How did we start and what have we learned since 2019?

More than four years ago at this point, we, 'Eco Baltia vide' and 'Latvijas Zaļais punkts', launched a pilot project to introduce a sorting system for textile in Latvia. Our goal was to investigate how much textile waste ends up in sorting containers, what options there are for returning these textiles back into the economy, how much infrastructure would be needed for that in Latvia, and what the costs would be to set up and maintain it.

We started rolling out the project by setting up the first 20 specialised containers for sorting textiles. Even then, we saw the high level of interest: people were happy to sort their textiles. The containers filled up quickly and four months after we deployed the new containers, we collected more than 50 tonnes of textiles people did not need. As we ramped the number of containers up to 60, we collected almost 500 tonnes in 2020 and more than 1000 tonnes, a year later.

Since the beginning of the textile sorting project, we have seen the quality of the textiles ranging from good to rags. Given that a big chunk of the textiles on Latvia's market is taken up by second-hand clothing, footwear, and home textiles, one expects these to wear out sooner. People also lacked knowledge about what materials were good for sorting: they associated textile sorting containers with waste. So in our first year, we were only able to get back into circulation less than half of the amount we had collected. The rest went to the landfill.

'In the waste management hierarchy, reduction, reuse, and recycling of waste are a priority.'

We set up a textile sorting workshop in one of our facilities and used it to sort the discarded textiles. The textiles we had collected were sorted into around 30 categories according to seasonality, quality, and many other aspects. At the same time, we explored the options for where these items would go next, and in the case of textiles, it mainly meant reuse. Unfortunately, recycling options for textiles are still poorly developed, although some of the sorted material can be

shredded as filler for things like upholstered furniture, and it was indeed allocated for that purpose. Over time, we outsourced the sorting of textiles to a partner, thus streamlining the overall textile management process.

As of now we have been able to increase the amount of all the textiles we collect that goes back into circulations to 97%. Most of it is sent for use as-intended in developing countries, some is recycled; we also donate some of the good and high-quality items. The remaining quantity that is not suited for reuse, which includes various plastics, old toys, and other types of waste, is handed over for the production of heat energy. Now, none of the sorted textiles we collect from the public end up in landfills.

Regulatory framework: a long and winding road

As early as 2022, we realised that introducing the sorting of textiles in Latvia was a very real possibility, achievable even before the deadline set by the EU. It could be introduced as early as 2023. At that time, we had already deployed more than 120 textile sorting containers in country. Other waste management companies also actively began setting them up. We had demonstrated that textiles have potential for reuse, and the public became more aware and motivated to take part in sorting textiles. Although the number of containers in Latvia was still limited, our survey in 2022 revealed that 33% of the public reported sorting textiles, while in 2020 only 21% of the population said they did so. Furthermore, 91% of the 2022 respondents pointed out that they supported the introduction of a national textile sorting system. In essence, what we lacked was a regulatory framework to assign more specific responsibilities for the implementation of the new system, and set up a procedure for its financing.

The matter was in the hands of national decision-makers. Although the ministry responsible for the field has been supportive of the introduction of the system, decision-making at national level has not gone as quickly as we hoped. It has taken years, but since 2024, Latvian municipalities are required to arrange the sorting of textiles. This does not make it more likely for the sorting equipment to be actually provided though, as this requires a certain amount of investment, which is currently still provided by the waste management companies. At the end of last year, however, the government decided that the natural resources tax would be charged over textiles introduced to the market starting from 1 July 2024, and this is a key factor that could make the system work properly.

The specific provisions are currently still in development. The only thing we know is the rate of the natural resources tax that textile manufacturers and retailers will be charged. It will be 0.50

euros per kilo of textiles released into the market. However, if the manufacturer and retailer decide to sign a contract with a company within the manufacturer responsibility system, they will get a 100% exemption from this tax. In such a case, the textile manufacturer or retailer will only bear the costs that directed through the manufacturer responsibility system into the development of the textile waste management system: that is, for the purchase and deployment and emptying of waste containers, the sorting of the textiles, and their handover for re-use, donation, and recycling, and for promoting the awareness and participation of the public in sorting activities.

For the textile sorting system to properly function in Latvia, we still need to know how much of the amounts released into the market would have to be collected via the textile manufacturer responsibility system, and, importantly, what the scope of these textiles will be. In other words, what products will be included in the system. For example, if we include in it clothing, footwear, and home textiles, it is also important to add carpets and similar items, for which there are still discussions ongoing in the country. If this is not done, this would effectively mean discriminating against one large section of retailers that would have to take responsibility for the textiles they sell, while others would not. Carpets are also one of the products that, whenever they come to the landfill along with the general flow of waste, impede the processing of the waste.

'Polluter pays' is an important principle for reducing the amount of waste created and increasing the reintroduction of waste in circulation.'

The main takeaway is that you don't have to reinvent the wheel to make the system work properly

Although we still don't see many international examples of textile sorting systems that a small country like Latvia could emulate, similar systems have been working well locally for more than 20 years, and there are valuable lessons to learn from these. For example, the systems for managing packaging and glass. And similarly to the textile management system already planned, those systems work as part of the manufacturer responsibility system. The state sets a specific target for how much of a certain type of waste one must be able to collect and recycle or recover in Latvia. In accordance with that target, one can determine the best methods for managing the waste, including the necessary sorting infrastructure coverage, the options for further reuse of the waste and, ultimately, the financing the system needs.

Of course, all systems tend to have processes with problems that need solving, such as the lack of control mechanisms leading to unhealthy market competition, the emergence of grey markets, the release of waste into the environment, etc. However, experience shows that if we fail to reinvent the wheel on a national scale for four years, then perhaps we should look at improving the wheel we have got, with functions that are already clear enough to everyone, and may need some improvement. This applies to textile sorting, too, as after four years of extensive discussions, it will soon be fully operational in Latvia, one of the first EU member states to have a system of this kind.

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Circular economy: paramount to achieve the European Commission's 2040 climate target

The European Commission unveiled a pivotal Communication outlining the 2040 climate target of 90% net GHG emissions reduction compared to 1990. This aims to put the EU on a firm path to climate neutrality by 2050. To deliver such an emission reduction, the analysis shows that the level of remaining EU GHG emissions in 2040 should be less than 850 $MtCO_2$-eq and carbon removals (from the atmosphere through land-based and industrial carbon removals) should reach up to 400 $MtCO_2$.

FEAD Team, first published on 07 February 2024

Among others, the Communication emphasises the significance of a renewed agenda for the circular economy, a sentiment welcomed by FEAD. In fact, the Impact Assessment shows that 'up until 2040, the circular economy will become increasingly important to achieve both climate ambition and a new prosperity model for Europe. It is key to wed action against climate change and excessive resources use with new economic opportunities and greater EU autonomy. This makes implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) a must and calls for a renewed partnership with industry for a circular economy agenda going forward'.

FEAD underlines the clear benefits of prioritising the circular economy and is committed to accelerating the uptake of secondary raw materials into the economy.

Supporting the CEAP's ambition to double its Circular Material Use Rate (CMUR) in this decade, FEAD developed in July 2023 its vision for the future of the industry. FEAD's vision is to shift Europe's overall material use towards recycled materials through industrial excellence in waste management. To do this, our target is to achieve a 75% target for the recycling of all waste (not only municipal) in the EU by 2035, which will indeed require Circular Economy Value Chain Partnerships that connect the waste management sector with industrial production.

This ambitious target also aligns with the EU's broader goals of reducing dependence on imports of critical raw materials and mitigating the environmental impact associated with natural resource extraction and consumption. Circularity boosts the EU's security and open strategic autonomy. Likewise, the development of CO_2 value-chains through carbon capture and use (CCU), nature-friendly biobased materials, mechanical and chemical recycling can all boost the development of non-fossil feedstock to substitute fossil fuels in carbon-based products.

However, FEAD emphasises the importance of:

- prioritising mechanical recycling, that has higher yield and low energy consumption
- avoiding a diversion of waste streams that could be mechanically recycled into chemical recycling, and
- not equating biobased plastic feedstock to recycled materials.

To reach climate neutrality by 2050, carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) and carbon recycling solutions are needed. FEAD strongly supports the utilisation and recycling of carbon to contribute to circular economy models. To develop this, clear, and harmonised EU rules are needed to provide robust incentives. Moreover, industrial carbon removals do not replace, but complement, natural carbon removals, which remain essential to reach the climate target and to which the waste management sector also makes important contributions to, through composting activities.

In conclusion, FEAD welcomes the European Commission's Communication on the 2040 climate target and acknowledges the concerted effort required to achieve these ambitious goals. The association stands ready to work alongside EU institutions to pave the way towards a sustainable, just, and prosperous society.

Claudia Mensi, FEAD President said:

'We are pleased to see the need for a circular economy highlighted in the European Commission's Communication as we believe it is the key to achieve our goals. That is why FEAD's vision is to drive Europe towards a 75% recycling target of all waste in the EU by 2035, facilitated by industrial excellence in waste management.'

New Waste Shipment Regulation formally adopted

FEAD Team, first published on 25 March 2024

The new Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR) was adopted today by the Council. Although most of the current rules will continue to apply for a defined transition period of two to three years, depending on the provision, today marks the final step of the formal adoption of the new regulation, which will then be published in the EU's Official Journal and enter into force 20 days later.

Safe and efficient shipments of waste are key for a circular economy. The new regulation brings important changes and modernises waste shipments, including the digitalisation of the procedures, which should increase the speed, efficiency, transparency, and traceability. Improving the efficiency of the procedures is one of the highest priorities for FEAD. Indeed, an important achievement in the revised regulation is the clarification that a shipment should not be considered illegal if only minor clerical errors in the documents occur. However, efficient procedures are not only dependent on a good regulation, but also on competent authorities with sufficient technical and material means to observe the deadlines and process the notifications satisfactorily. Contrary to FEAD's view, co-legislators have decided to limit the possibility of tacit consents to transit authorities. Therefore, we now make a call to the Member States to ensure that their administrations can process waste shipment notifications in due time so that we can overcome the long and persistent delays we currently face.

Important to note is that the entry into force of the new WSR will not be the end of the legislative work but also the beginning. The text includes substantial empowerment clauses for the Commission to adopt implementing and delegating acts, that can bring relevant and needed improvements and clarifications, to help overcome bottlenecks linked to differing interpretations by authorities. These include a possible risk-based and harmonised method for calculating the financial guarantee or equivalent insurance; the specification of the technical feasibility and economic viability required to authorise shipments for disposal; or classification criteria for waste. In addition, the Commission will have to supplement the regulation establishing and updating the list of non-OECD countries to which export of non-hazardous waste from the Union for recovery are authorised. Important work lays ahead, to which FEAD is ready to contribute with experience and expertise.

Claudia Mensi, FEAD President commented:

'The new WSR introduces restrictions for international waste markets, which means that we will keep more of the generated waste within the EU. Our role as industry representatives is now to make institutions understand that such restrictions require improved recycling and waste management capacities, a strong and stable demand for recyclates, and improved procedures for us to be able to process these increased amounts of waste. In addition, a smooth and harmonised implementation of the new WSR by all competent authorities will be essential because a review is not foreseen until 2035.'

Waste Shipment © Copyright Free

FEAD calls for circular resources for a European Industrial Deal in its Manifesto for the 2024 EU elections

Ahead of the 2024 European elections, FEAD, the European Waste Management Association, published its manifesto, calling for circular resources for a European Industrial Deal and proposing the establishment of a Circular Material Use Act.

The manifesto serves as a call to action for the next term of European Institutions. It emphasises the need to prioritise a European Industrial Deal that makes Europe's industry sustainable, competitive, and circular.

Furthermore, it highlights the need for a Circular Material Use Act (CMUA) to enact comprehensive policies encompassing waste management and the transformation of waste materials into productive resources for industrial production. As Claudia Mensi, FEAD's President highlights 'for the circular economy to function, there needs to be a constant demand for recycled materials that compete with the quality standards and prices of virgin materials'.

The manifesto parts from the Vision for 2030, which FEAD published in February. Thus, the CMUA should establish two legally binding targets:

- A Circular Material Use Rate target of 25% by 2030, 30% by 2040, and 35% by 2050.
- A target of 75% for the recycling of all waste materials in the EU by 2035.

These targets will support shifting Europe's material use towards recycled materials and foster innovation in a thriving circular economy. In addition, to drive the transition towards a comprehensive circular economy, the CMUA will need to act on 5 key levers:

- Aligning industrial production to the circular economy
- Strengthening EU autonomy over its supply of resources
- Harnessing the potential of waste management and the circular economy towards climate change mitigation measures
- Establishing an enforcement mechanism for European waste management legislation
- Ensuring there is a competitive market for waste management.

FEAD Team, first published on 07 May 2024

'For the circular economy to function, there needs to be a constant demand for recycled materials that compete with the quality standards and prices of virgin materials.'

Circular resources for a European Industrial Deal: **why Europe needs a Circular Material Use Act**

FEAD
European Waste Management Association

FEAD at Waste Management Europe

In April 2024, FEAD had the privilege of taking part to the Waste Management Europe Conference & Exhibition in Bergamo, Italy.

The event itself was focused on how to connect people to forge new opportunities, new partnerships, new pathways and to which FEAD contributed by sharing its European perspective on the field.

On Tuesday, 9th April, our president, Claudia Mensi opened the 'Global initiatives' section with a speech focused on FEAD's vision and mission, showing FEAD's commitment to shift Europe's overall material use towards recycled materials through industrial excellence in waste management.

After Claudia's presentation, FEAD members and experts, Yoana Yoncheva (Chairwoman at the Bulgarian Recycling and Recovery Association), Mia Nores (Director at The Recycling Industries of Finland), David Lamy (Director General of Recycling and Recovery in SUEZ) and Herwart Wilms (Managing Director at REMONDIS) held an extremely enlightening panel discussion in which they singularly shared their vision and the objectives that they are personally committed to pursuing as head of their companies and associations. They also proposed solutions to the issues that their Member States have encountered whilst trying to achieve the EU targets.

FEAD Team

David Lamy explained the importance of understanding the best use for each waste stream and the resource, according to their different levels of emission and how important is the long term planification in the waste management industry is.

Herwart Wilms pointed out that the real circular economy starts from the products and not from waste, and the importance of pursuing design for recycling and design that uses more recycled materials.

Yoana Yoncheva explained the efforts that her country, Bulgaria, is constantly doing to excel in recycling and to get out of the red zone in the Early Warning Report published by the European Commission in July 2023.

Finally, Mia Nores underlined that Europe is already doing well in waste collection targets, but the demand of secondary raw materials needs to be accelerated.

Claudia Mensi, FEAD President at Waste Management Europe ©FEAD

'Real circular economy does not start from waste but from products.'

— Herwart Wilms, Managing Director at REMONDIS

This engaging dialogue among waste management experts ended with a round of engaging questions from the audience.

The day after, on 10 April, Claudia Mensi, had the pleasure to moderate the event led by Erica Srl which focused on PFAS, a hot topic FEAD has been working on for months and for which it commissioned a study from the University of Padova under the guidance of the late Professor Pivato and his team. At the same time, FEAD also took part in the trade fair, with a stand where many curious onlookers and experts expressed their interest. This was an excellent moment of visibility for our association, which is growing more each day.

Thank you to all the participants and organisators of this event full of fruitful discussion and exchanges that set the path for the circular economy in Europe.

Paolo Campanella, FEAD Secretary General and Giulia Caroli, FEAD Trainee ©FEAD

Watch the interviews and learn more about our time at WME 2024

FEAD's Hybrid Workshop on 'Circular Value Chain Partnerships'

FEAD Team

On 16 April, FEAD hosted an insightful and engaging hybrid workshop on 'Circular Value Chain Partnerships' in Brussels. This event marked a significant step forward in exploring innovative collaborations within the waste management sector to drive circularity and sustainability across various industries.

This was part of our Vision for 2030. Indeed, in our vision, published in February 2024, we stated that to achieve the goal of boosting the uptake of secondary raw materials into the economy, Circular Economy Partnerships that connect the waste management sector with industrial production were required. The workshop highlighted five key sectors where circular value chain partnerships can play a pivotal role: construction & landscaping, plastics packaging, renewable energy and batteries, automotive, and voluminous objects such as mattresses, furniture, and textiles. These sectors represent critical areas where effective collaboration can maximise resource efficiency and promote sustainable practices.

One of the main takeaways from the workshop was the clear enthusiasm and interest demonstrated by the FEAD community in establishing and nurturing these partnerships. This enthusiasm underscores the commitment of the sector to embrace circular economy principles and work together towards tangible solutions.

During the workshop, two compelling case studies were presented, offering insights into diverse collaboration options. Chico van Hemert, Managing Director of RetourMatras, shared insights into a project focused on mattress recycling, while Cveta Majtanovic, Chief Sustainability Officer at Rubber Conversion, discussed initiatives related to rubber recycling.

The workshop also unveiled five projects to demonstrate the depth of circular value chain partnerships envisaged by FEAD:

- **Building Loops:** This project aims to establish a value chain partnership focused on the separate collection of construction and demolition waste. By advocating for supportive policies and addressing operational challenges, FEAD seeks to foster a policy coalition to drive sustainable practices in this sector.
- **Forgotten Plastics:** This partnership's addresses the overlooked area of commercial and industrial plastic packaging. This initiative aims to develop a European value chain for collecting, recycling, and promoting the use of recycled content in flexible plastics. This project aligns with FEAD's mission to promote circularity across diverse waste streams.

Circular value chain partnerships ©FEAD

- **Hazards Out:** This partnership project targets fire hazards and damage caused by lithium-ion batteries in waste management facilities. FEAD proposes supporting the implementation of separate collection for hazardous waste and monitoring fire hazards to identify patterns and inform prevention strategies.
- **Vehicles for Circularity:** With a focus on integrating secondary raw materials into vehicle manufacturing, this project aims to engage vehicle and tire manufacturers in sustainable material sourcing for transport and mobility. FEAD emphasises the need to expand the scope beyond vehicles to embrace a holistic view of circularity.
- **Sleep Circular:** Addressing the challenge of mattress waste, this partnership seeks to optimise mattress collection, treatment, and recycling while promoting the uptake of recycled content. FEAD wants to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders to enhance mattress recycling and circularity.

These ambitious projects align closely with FEAD's Vision 2030, which aims to shift Europe's overall material use towards recycled materials through industrial excellence in waste management. FEAD is committed to driving innovation and collaboration to achieve these goals and create lasting positive change within the waste management sector and the circular economy as a whole.

The Hybrid workshop was followed by FEAD's first General Assembly of the year.

FEAD General Assembly ©FEAD

FEAD & CAObH October event

We are excited to announce that FEAD, in partnership with our member from the Czech Republic, CAObH, is hosting a two-day event on 30-31 October 2024 in the beautiful city of Prague.

The event promises to be an excellent opportunity for our members to connect and engage with professionals in the waste sector.

Prague is the ideal backdrop for this event. We will soon provide some information on our agreement with a hotel in Prague.

The first day will be a half-day that includes a welcome lunch, a working seminar for FEAD and CAObH members and FEAD's Executive Council meeting followed by a dinner.

The second day will be a full day international conference on recycling, energy, climate and economy and water.

We believe this event will be highly beneficial for all attendees, as it will provide valuable opportunities to learn, share, and collaborate. We encourage all our members to attend this two-day event, as our Executive Council will also be taking place. It's the perfect opportunity for us to meet up and discuss pressing issues in the waste sector.

FEAD Team

'We encourage all our members to attend this two-day event, as our Executive Council will also be taking place. It's the perfect opportunity for us to meet up and discuss pressing issues in the waste sector.'

Prague ©Copyright free

FEAD & CAObH EVENT 2024

Working seminar, FEAD Executive Council & International conference

30-31st October 2024

REGISTER NOW

Provisional Agenda

OCT 30 2024	**Half day** Welcome lunch Working seminar for FEAD and CAObH members FEAD's Executive Council meeting Dinner
OCT 31 2024	**Full day** All day international conference on energy, recycling, climate & economy and water

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