

WEBINAR SERIES:

EU Green Deal Policies and their  
Relevance in Asia-Pacific

# The Circular Economy Act

Webinar Insights

switchasia



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**The circular economy model:**  
less raw material, less waste, fewer emissions



## Context

The **EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component** and the **European Environmental Bureau** held a **webinar** on the 10 July 2025 about the **EU's Circular Economy Act**. This was part of a **series of webinars**, which seeks to explore the implications of EU policies related to Sustainable Consumption and Production for its partner countries, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. It aims to understand the goals of these policies, their relevance in specific contexts, and their implications for stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific, particularly concerning legislation that has emerged from EU policies. This brief aims to capture the ideas shared during the webinar but is not a comprehensive analysis of the policy. It will describe the context of the webinar topic and the key ideas discussed. The webinar focused on clarity and diversity of views, rather than comprehensiveness.

## Key Messages

The EU's upcoming Circular Economy Act is planned for the fourth quarter of 2026. As announced in the **Clean Industrial Deal** and the **Competitiveness compass**, the content of the act has been taking shape since the beginning of the 2024-2029 European Commission mandate. It will continue on the basis built from the 2020 **EU Circular Economy Action Plan**, with aims to improve how industries view and use resources, reduce waste, and compete globally.

The new Act will aim to turn waste into resources by creating an EU single market for secondary materials. A key priority of the EU Circular Economy Act will be to harmonise circular economy policies across Member States, reducing regulatory fragmentation and simplifying legislation.

The impacts will reach beyond the EU's borders. It is therefore an important moment for stakeholders with an interest in circularity policy get to involved in shaping the Act, through the public consultation open until 6 November 2025 and in the legislative process that will follow. Companies and organisations, no matter their location, are invited to participate in the legislative process.

## Introduction

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The **EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component** and the **European Environmental Bureau**, held the webinar, ***The Circular Economy Act*** to facilitate a conversation about the intentions behind the upcoming Circular Economy Act (planned for Q4 2026), and how actors (within and outside the Asia-Pacific region) can contribute to shaping it. During this event, several leading experts convened to discuss the evolution of circular economy policy around the world, and concrete next steps for a holistic shift away from the linear economic models of the past.

## The next chapter for the circular economy in the EU

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Karolina D'Cunha, Head of Unit Competitive Circular Economy and Clean Industrial Policy at the European Commission's Directorate General for the Environment, outlined the EU Circular Economy Act's goals: improving the single market for secondary raw materials, addressing legal and administrative barriers, harmonising definitions like "end of waste," reforming EPR schemes, introducing recycled content targets, and revising e-waste regulations. She acknowledged the complexity of trade implications, especially with recycled content requirements, and the need for stakeholder consultation. To that end, she announced that a public consultation on the Act is underway, with a 6 November 2025 deadline.

Circularity can enable competitiveness, job creation, and industrial scaling. Rasmus Nordquist, Member of the European Parliament (Greens/DK), described how circular economy is no longer just a niche environmental topic but has become – and must become – core economic policy. He highlighted the importance of building a better internal market for products and materials, supported by financing and private investment. He also emphasised the need for global cooperation, especially with Asia, because of the production and recycling capacities and opportunities to learn from each other. He underlined the potential trade implications of the upcoming Circular Economy Act, noting that it could lead to reduced raw material exports from Asia to the EU, but that this could also lead to opportunities for better production and reuse globally.

The need for a broader resource governance approach was highlighted by Eva Bille, head of Circular Economy at the European Environmental Bureau. She advocated for a focus not only on recycling and secondary materials but also on reducing overall consumption and footprint. To highlight this broader view, she pointed towards the example of extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes that not only harmonise to the lowest common denominator but also cover costs comprehensively and encourage product redesign, reuse, and repair. She voiced concerns about the fate of products exported from Europe with the stated purpose of reuse (but arriving as waste or becoming waste shortly after arriving), and the need for global responsibility.

## The missing links and the connection to the Asia-Pacific region

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The ASEAN circular economy framework may be fragmented, but it is advancing. Latifahaida Latif from the ASEAN Secretariat highlighted that we must tackle the issue of our "finite resources". She stated that circularity is *"not just another appendix in our policy document, it is a new source of growth for the region"*. According to ASEAN internal modelling, transitioning to a circular economy could create up to 4.9 trillion US dollars value add to the collective GDP by 2050, creating jobs and bringing value to the population.

She stressed the importance of capacity building, skills development, and private sector engagement, particularly for MSMEs, and announced the upcoming ASEAN Centre of Excellence to support this transition through collaboration and capacity building. As a group of countries of varying size, collaboration is an excellent avenue towards developing economies of scale for circularity. To that end, the trade in goods agreement currently being negotiated (set to conclude at the end of 2025) will look towards governing transboundary movement of circular products and materials. And the region will be looking at several levers – including remanufacturing, not just recycling.

In Bangladesh, moving towards a circular economy also has economic as well as environmental advantages, especially when considering market access to the EU, enabled through legislative compliance. Dr. Zaki Zaman from UNIDO Bangladesh detailed how government policies in the country are evolving, from the 8<sup>th</sup> five-year plan of the past government and beyond with the current interim government. Underpinning circular economy policy is a state strategy to go from a “least developed country” (LDC) to a developing country. Aligned with trading partners, the strategy is “*emphasising resource efficiency and waste reduction through circular economic practices, as well as research to explore improvement of production practices.*”

UNIDO is hosting a global project across Bangladesh, Morocco, and Egypt, where the Bangladeshi element focuses on textiles and garments. This is also embedded in the Ministry of Commerce 2024-2027 export policy. Another UNIDO project focuses on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, with a draft political guideline submitted to the Ministry of Environment, which is expected to be vetted this year. Capacity building of industries and academia will be critical to achieve the expected outcomes of these policy changes.

## Conclusion

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The Circular Economy Act could be the missing piece that unlocks circular solutions in the EU as well as in the Asia-Pacific region. Stakeholder input, from all types of organisations – in the EU and beyond – will be critical in order to strike the right balance and to achieve the best environmental and social outcomes for the people around the world.

” In her concluding remarks. Ms. Bille noted that *“it is very inspiring to see that collaboration is already happening, and we hope it will continue to happen to make sure as many perspectives and angles as possible are taken into account for this progress towards a truly circular economy. We need systemic change, and a framework for managing resources. We know that 6 out of 9 planetary boundaries have been crossed and we are living outside of our allocated resource budgets, so we need to think about whether products are needed, redesign to extend useful life, repair, and improve industrial symbiosis/ production processes to make the most out of the limited resources we all depend on.”*

## References

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- Public Consultation, Circular Economy Act (open until 6 November 2025): [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14812-Circular-Economy-Act\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/14812-Circular-Economy-Act_en)
- Framework for Circular Economy for the ASEAN economic community: [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Framework-for-Circular-Economy-for-the-AEC\\_Final.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Framework-for-Circular-Economy-for-the-AEC_Final.pdf)



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