

# **Rethinking circularity, the rudiment of a cleaner and more competitive Europe.**

## **A data-driven and evidence-based national experience**

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**Abstract:** This topic is highly relevant in the context of the reborn of the economic concept of circularity. In the feud of ideas about circularity since the study of economics formally began to take shape, circularity came as a response to the challenge of sustainability and as a destiny of the traditional linear economic model. Navigating toward a circular economy would imply upgrading the take, make and dispose model to one based on the goods that are designed to cycle back through reuse, recycle, or repairing.

As studies show since almost ten years ago that enabling circular economies will lead to important savings (Engel et al., 2016) and it is a significant step in protecting the environment (Atasu et al., 2018), the development of circular economies has gained ground also due to the support of the national, European and international authorities like the United Nations, by better regulation and policy-making around circularity. The circular economy is an essential component of sustainability, providing a concrete framework for implementing SDGs in practice.

The most recent competitiveness strategy for Europe (Draghi, 2024) stresses the important role circularity must play for both the horizontal convergence and the vertical convergence pertaining to the enhanced approach of the circular value chains. The objective of the research is to map the progress of EU countries considering both the first EU's first circular economy action plan (COM/2015/0614 final) and the ambitious goals set by EU's New Circular Economy Action plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe (COM(2020) 98 final). Key indicators of success include the extent to which Member States have adopted circular practices, implemented supportive policies, and engaged stakeholders in the transition process.

Rethinking circularity is not just an environmental necessity, but also a socio-economic opportunity capable of driving innovation, creating jobs, improving quality of life, social responsibility and enhancing competitiveness in the global market.

This research will adopt a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of circularity in Europe. From a methodological point of view, the following methods and tools have been used during the development of this analysis:

1. Relevant scholarly literature analysis (e.g. Kirchherr et al., 2017, Esposito et al., 2018; Hopkinson et al., 2018; Aceleanu et al., 2019; Newell et al., 2021; Borms et al., 2023; Alberich et al., 2023)
2. Legal framework analysis (The National Strategy for Sustainable Development, European Green Deal, Closing the loop - An EU action plan for the Circular Economy (COM/2015/0614 final), A new Circular Economy Action Plan For a cleaner and more competitive Europe (COM(2020) 98 final)) to measure progress and effectiveness of circular initiatives.
3. Data analysis (countries and sectoral assessment reports, EU Circular Economy Monitoring Framework – data available on Eurostat) to identify trends, correlations, and impacts of circular economy initiatives on economic and environmental outcomes.