

Going circular



National level processes towards a circular economy

Countries across the world have started the journey towards a circular economy. The EU aspires to lead international efforts towards a circular economy transition, delivering on the environmental ambition of the [European Green Deal](#). The [EU Circular Economy Action Plan](#) is the blueprint and compass guiding relevant EU actions.

[DG INTPA](#), supported by the SWITCH to Green Facility, explored the circular economy transition processes at a national level to produce insights on selected country experiences in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In Colombia, Ecuador, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Uganda and Senegal, interviews with stakeholders including EU Delegations, national governments, the private sector and civil society, helped provide analysis of the vision and motivation of actors in the circular economy transition process, the key challenges met and the milestones set. Lessons learnt and success factors were gathered to enable a better understanding of the “recipes” for replication.

In a circular economy (CE), the value of products, materials and resources is maintained for as long as possible and the generation of waste is minimised. Cleaner production, resource efficiency and improved waste prevention/management are often the first stepping stones to a circular economy as the case studies illustrate.

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Circular economy

A paradigm for Colombia's future

Colombia is endowed with diverse geography, a variety of ecosystems, and considerable renewable and non-renewable resources. As with other countries well-endowed in natural resources, Colombia's economy is not highly diversified. It remains substantially reliant on natural resources and exposed to market fluctuations and price volatility. A growing population, extended urbanisation and increasing waste generation threaten the country's natural capital. Colombia has progressively recognised the need for a systemic shift to an economy that builds long-term resilience, generates business and economic opportunities, and provides environmental and societal benefits.

In 2019, Colombia was the first country in Latin America to adopt a [National Circular Economy Strategy](#). The strategy prioritises action in six material/resource flows: industrial materials and consumer goods, packaging materials, biomass, energy, water, and building materials. It is aligned with Colombia's [Green Growth Policy](#) and roadmap for 2030 and with the [2018-2022 National Development Plan \(NDP\) "Pact for Colombia. Pact for Equity"](#) (2018), which features the development of a circular economy model based on durability, reusability, reparability and recyclability. Foundations for a CE conducive policy framework were laid down

as early as 1997, when Colombia adopted a [Policy for Cleaner Production](#). The [National Policy on Sustainable Production and Consumption](#) followed in 2010. The [National Policy on Integrated Solid Waste Management](#), introduced in 2016, aims to extend product lifetime, maintain the value of products and materials in the production cycle, reduce waste generation, and encourage recycling and reuse. The [Green Growth Policy](#) (2018), supporting environmental sustainability and improved business competitiveness, formally prioritised the elaboration of a long-term National Circular Economy Strategy.

Colombia's path to a circular economy

Fostering commitment among stakeholders: A CE benefits from the dedication of diverse stakeholders. The signature of a National Pact and Regional Pacts for the Circular Economy endorsed the commitment of multiple actors. The Vice-President of the Republic, representatives of various ministries, regional authorities and leading professional business associations were among the signatories underlining their commitment to drive the transition to a CE.

Building ownership and support for policy decisions: A working group on the CE under the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development (MADS) worked intensively to refine an initial version of the National Circular Economy Strategy. The document was discussed at more than 20 events, such as regional workshops and conferences, expanding knowledge on the CE, creating acceptance of the CE strategy, and both refining and validating its provisions.

Sharing knowledge to enable the transition: In addition to dissemination campaigns and a CE training programme for government officials from various ministries and national offices, the integration of a CE into the country's competitiveness agenda facilitated the dissemination and appropriation of a CE at the sub-national (regional) level. A sustainability committee was created within the framework of the National System of Competitiveness in Innovation where public and private actors discuss where public and private actors discuss progress. More than 21 regional CE roundtables, which formulate projects for the development of the strategy in the regions, have been created through the regional competitiveness commissions.

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Building the case by taking stock of progress: The level of circularity achieved by the country's economy has been closely monitored by the National Administrative Department of Statistics and was presented in the [First Report on the Circular Economy](#) (August 2020). A broader process, involving the creation of a circular economy information roundtable with six sub-tables, each dedicated to a corresponding strategic priority and engaging relevant line actors, identified circular-economy-related statistical information and led to the creation of a Circular Economy Information System (SIEC in its Spanish acronym). Discussions in sub-tables, one for each priority line of action, identified important indicators and statistics for each line.

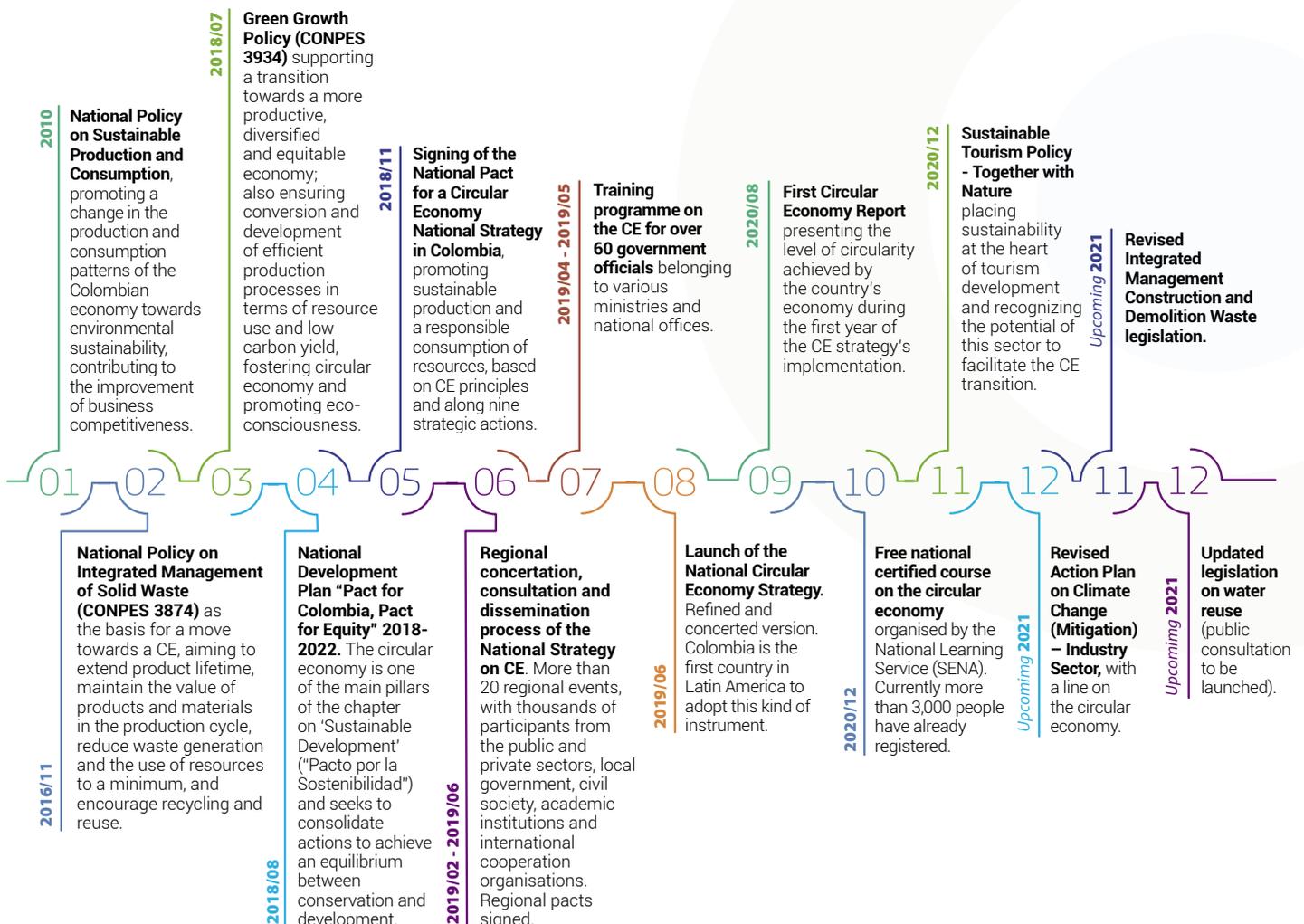
Integrating circular economy approaches into relevant policy processes: Recognising the potential of the tourism sector in facilitating the CE transition, Colombia launched the [Sustainable Tourism Policy - Together with Nature](#) in December 2020. Furthermore, the Revised Action Plan on Climate Change (Mitigation) – Industry Sector embraces circularity considerations, while both an upcoming piece of legislation (Integrated Construction and Demolition Waste Management) and a future piece of legislation on water reuse are being revised to include circular economy approaches.



“The motto ‘Produce conserving and Preserve producing’ is in the DNA of Colombia’s Development Plan. A pillar for the future of our country and its vision and strategy toward a circular economy”

Carlos Andres Arévalo Pérez
 Director of the Productivity and Competitiveness Directorate of the Ministry of Commerce, Tourism and Industry

CE transition milestones in Colombia



Drivers for transformation

Strong political leadership:

has been fundamental to Colombia's transition to a CE; a clear vision has been set by both the President and the Vice-President and has been shared across a number of ministries and departments. Thanks to the Minister of Environment, significant focus was put on the CE and its potential to generate new jobs, and on identifying new investments. This was achieved by establishing a team of professionals dedicated to the CE at government level and by bringing CE matters to high-level national agendas.

Mobilising resources and investments: After the peace process and OECD membership accession in 2020, Colombia has mobilised investments resulting in rapid economic growth and contributing to a shift towards more sustainable models. Commitment to international agreements (e.g. the Paris Agreement, where the Colombian Government announced ambitious reduction targets of 51% by 2030 compared to the projected baseline) and close cooperation with international partners, notably the EU (see below), have positioned the country as a front runner on sustainable development and the CE in high-level global and regional dialogues. Increased financing lines and technical assistance are currently supporting the design of economic instruments with an environmental perspective.

Regional leadership: Colombia plays a significant role at the regional level in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), ensuring that the CE concept will continue gaining significant traction. The government's **clear vision for a sustainable way of production** and a common view of 'Produce conserving and Preserve producing' has set an example in the region.

Awareness and dissemination: Strong awareness campaigns targeting the public, the private sector and academia engaged a significant number of key actors, who created and exchanged ideas on the integration of circular economy approaches across different sectors. In a relatively short period of time, a critical number of businesses had been persuaded of the competitive advantages of adopting circular economy approaches.

Protection of ecosystems and natural resources: The depletion of natural resources, changes in land use, and the saturation of sanitary landfills required a rapid shift in the production and consumption paradigm and in territorial planning. Facing these challenges, the CE was promoted as a means to avoid conflicts between land uses.

EU support for the circular economy transition in Colombia

A key step in EU's cooperation with Colombia on the CE was the 2017 Circular Economy Mission. The EU mission to the country was complemented by more than 50 EU companies that shared experiences with the Colombian Administration and business sector. After the mission, the EU started a high-level policy dialogue on the CE addressing the government and ministries. The EU supported the development of the country's CE strategy and action plan(s). The EU Ambassador highlighted the CE transition with multiple public appearances and by supporting the signing of the National Pact (2018). In addition, the EU promoted a massive communication campaign across different media channels.

Since 2019, the EU has provided technical assistance via the SWITCH to Green Facility for the implementation of the "National Circular Economy Strategy 2018-2022" including specific priority strategies for composting and for the reuse of water in agriculture, the identification of appropriate economic instruments and the facilitation of access to finance.

Furthermore, the formulation of the national plan for the sustainable management of single-use plastic, the elaboration

of policies and measures related to packaging and containers, and the development of actions and of a policy framework for waste management and reuse were delivered with EU support. Technical assistance is also available for the inter-ministerial agenda between the MADS and the Ministry of Agriculture, considering the high potential that the CE can have on sustainable agriculture and its link with the green recovery.

Budgetary support (equal to €9 million for the MADS in 2020-22) is provided by the EU for the second phase of the "Sector Reform Contract for Sustainable Local Development in Colombia". An action line on the circular economy aims at implementing the CE strategy and promoting CE investments. EU budgetary support is managed by the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism to scale existing programmes, such as the *Fábrica de Productividad* and InnovaCluster, promoting the CE transition in business and sustainable production in the private sector. Additionally, the EU funds a number of projects including "Sustainable production and trade" and the regional programme "[Low Carbon and Circular Economy Business Action in the Americas](#)". Further bilateral cooperation focused on the CE is under discussion.

EU support at a glance

- **Technical assistance for:**
 - › the implementation of the country's CE strategy, including the identification of appropriate economic instruments and the facilitation of access to finance
 - › the formulation of the national plan for the sustainable management of single-use plastic
 - › the elaboration of policies and measures related to packaging and containers, waste management and reuse
- **Financial assistance:**
 - › budgetary support for the "Sector Reform Contract for Sustainable Local Development in Colombia"
 - › budgetary support to scale existing programmes, such as *Fábrica de Productividad* and *InnovaCluster*
 - › funding of the "Sustainable production and trade" project and of the "Low Carbon and Circular Economy Business Action in the Americas" regional programme
- **Further assistance:**
 - › collaboration in a massive communication campaign to spread the CE concept

Lessons learnt

EU cooperation with Colombia over the past few years has led to the following lessons learnt:



Jointly commit to support the transition: The EU reinforced the Colombian Government's vision related to the CE, recognizing the relevance of their strategic and priority actions. At the same time, the EU has been actively engaging with the government and has mobilised cooperation instruments in a flexible way. The EU highlighted the potential that a shift towards the green and circular economy may have in generating both jobs and consensus. This has created more confidence among key stakeholders in the process and in the EU as a partner in this transition.



Involve the highest national political level: In Colombia, the buy-in and leadership of the President and the Vice-President in the CE transition process have facilitated EU ambition to take and discuss the CE at the highest political level, and boost the transition process.



Analyse the context conditions: Political economy analysis made it possible to identify champions/key players from different contexts who can spearhead the transition to a circular economy. Furthermore, understanding key actors, their interests and their roles facilitated communication.



Establish multiple entry points: In Colombia, the EU established direct communication channels at three different levels: at a high policy level between the EU Ambassador and the President, Vice-President and key ministers; at a strategic level between the EUD Head of Cooperation and the relevant sector deputy ministers; and at a technical level with the directorates of key ministries.



Design an inclusive process: The inclusive process involved ministries other than the Ministry of Environment, the private sector, academia, waste pickers' organisations and thousands of citizens who contributed ideas to transform the country towards a more productive economy that cares for its ecosystems. Informed stakeholders have been able to increasingly engage and formulate coherent strategies and actions within their sectors, participate in constructive dialogues and experience interchanges, demonstrating ownership of the topic.

Lessons learnt



Create a common understanding of the CE and a culture towards

CE: The EU and the government invested in raising mass awareness by promoting inclusive political processes, such as participatory road mapping approaches, working groups, conferences, trainings, roundtables or media campaigns. A simplification of the term and massive information and education campaigns can facilitate citizens' understanding and adaption of circular practices.



Building productive partnerships and transformative alliances

between countries in the region and with the EU is crucial for a successful transition. The EU could also play a role in facilitating these long-term partnerships across the region. Cooperation at the regional level can create a multiplier effect in the transition towards a CE.



Highlight the CE as an opportunity for green

recovery: Within the framework of a post-COVID green recovery, the EU envisages to support green business development both directly and in collaboration with the government, and to organise and participate in green recovery related events. The approved recovery framework includes specific actions on the Circular Economy such as the study for the inclusion of recovered materials in infrastructure projects.

Future steps

In spite of progress made, more efforts are needed to fully realise a CE transition. A more committed participation and representation of all relevant ministries is key to completing the vision of the National Circular Economy Strategy. Decentralisation of decisions, engagement and the active participation of the sub-national level into specific action plans is fundamental to achieving the objectives of the National Strategy. Further extensive and coordinated interventions are necessary to boost changes in the production model at scale, especially among SMEs and micro enterprises. A change in the culture and mindset of entrepreneurs towards circularity can be fostered with the support of local authorities. Working with sector clusters, as well as with consumers, can promote circular practices and a sustainable consumption model. To amplify the CE, it is important to demonstrate the scalability of circular economy models. More investment in innovation and technology transfer can foster technological development in the SMEs involved. Additional financial support is crucial, as it provides a stable investment environment and functioning markets for business, in addition to addressing inequality.



Ecuador goes circular

The strategy behind

Ecuador is a country of great natural riches and a growing economy, facing the challenges that come with the intensification of industrial activity and changing consumption patterns. For instance, only 6% of produced waste is recycled nationwide (National Institute of Statistics and Census, 2018). Despite a growing number of initiatives over the last decade aiming to improve resource extraction and use, sustainable consumption, reuse of waste materials to manufacture new products, and energy efficiency, the concept of the circular economy (CE) has until recently been relatively unknown in the country.

Important foundations for a circular policy framework were laid down between 2014 and 2018 as circular-economy-related concepts were integrated into key national legislation. Ecuador's turn towards a circular economy future is manifested in strategic policy initiatives like the National Strategy and Action Plan for the Circular Economy Transition (due mid 2021), the Law for the Circular Economy (under approval by the National

Assembly), and the endorsed National Development Plan 2017-2021 ("Toda una Vida") which embraces principles of the circular and bio economy, encouraging recycling and extending product lifetime. Ongoing policy processes include the Law for Extended Producer Responsibility, a specific norm for electronic waste (expected to be adopted in 2021) and updates to legislation on non-recyclable plastics.

The roadmap – how Ecuador is turning circular

🕒 **Integrating circular economy approaches into different policy processes:** With the establishment of the National Solid Waste Management Working Group (2014), circular economy considerations were duly integrated into Ecuador's debates on the Agenda 2030 and on the Action Plan of the National Biodiversity Strategy (2015-2030). In 2015, Ecuador adopted a National Strategy for the Change of the Productive Matrix that aims for a more responsible management of resources and the adoption of regulations and incentives for higher environmental standards, eco-efficiency and environmentally-friendly practices. These processes led to the development of more comprehensive policy approaches directly focusing on the CE, such as the Law on the CE and the National CE Action Plan.

🕒 **Endorsing multi-stakeholder commitment:** In addition to the leadership of the Vice-President's Office shifting to a CE, the CE in Ecuador benefited from multi-sector participation, engaging both local and national actors from the policy arena, private sector, academia and civil society. Commitment to the Circular Economy was endorsed with the [National Pact for a Circular Economy](#) (2019), signed by over 330 supporting parties who are driving the country's transition to a circular economy along nine strategic axes, including (among others) industrialisation and the use of waste, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, eco-design, sustainable business, the progressive substitution of plastics and the development of CE indicators.

◉ **Elaborating a Circular Economy National Strategy and Action Plan (white paper):** The white paper aligns the CE concept to Ecuador’s 2030 Agenda and the corresponding National Development Plan and is based on four fundamental axes: i) sustainable production; ii) responsible consumption; iii) integrated waste management; and iv) policies and financing. It pinpoints the most relevant legal mechanisms to support a CE strategy, and identifies 5 priority sectors (manufacturing, agriculture, commerce, construction, and oil & mining) for the CE transition. When finalised (end of 2020), the white paper will include concrete lines of action within the priority sectors, as well as measures to further develop and implement the necessary policy and regulatory framework and to secure appropriate financing for all actions.

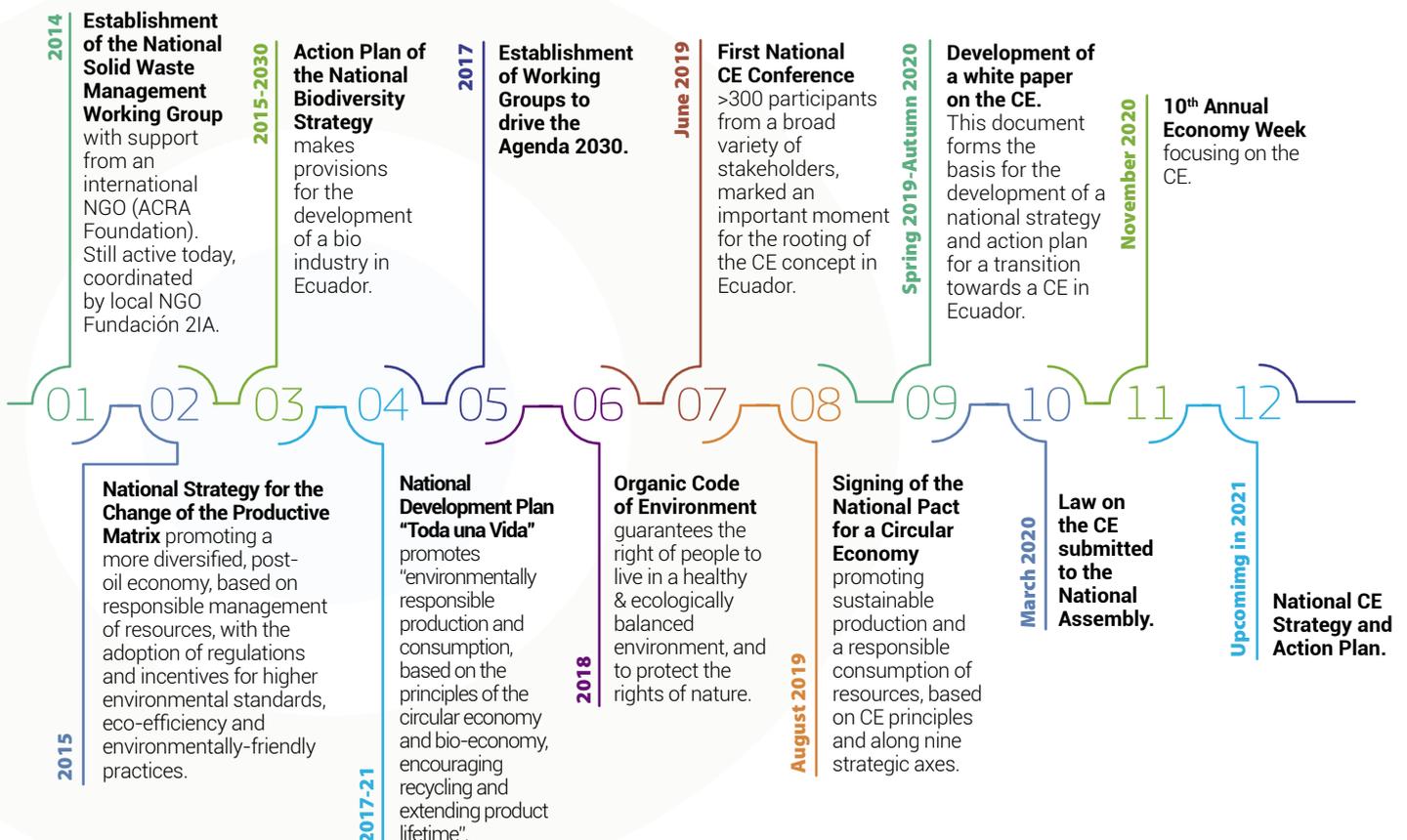
◉ **Disseminating information and sharing knowledge:** Widespread awareness on the CE was facilitated by the First National Conference on the Circular Economy (2019) and connected media campaigns, creating a common understanding of the concept. It kickstarted the development of a white paper geared towards a CE-specific policy and regulatory framework.



“Even with limited resources, with the right narrative regarding the importance of a transition to CE, open dialogue with key counterparts, the mobilisation of EU expertise, a solid communication strategy and a pinch of creativity you can give important impulses to the process and achieve a large impact”

Andrea Ferrari Bravo, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Ecuador

Key milestones for the green and circular transition



Drivers for the circular shift

◉ **Environmental protection:** Ecuador is highly biodiverse, hosting around 6.1% of all species reported worldwide. Protecting its great natural riches, Ecuador was the first country in the world to recognise nature in its constitution as an individual entity with its own rights.

◉ **Political direction:** Achieving the buy-in and leadership of the Vice-President's (VP) Office was an important cornerstone as the VP has a special mandate from the President to stimulate the economy. The VP's office is also responsible for inter-ministerial coordination. The VP's office has been instrumental in securing high levels of participation at all key milestones so far, including the National CE Conference, the National Pact for the CE and the CE white paper.

DRIVERS

Environmental **protection**
Regional **leadership ambition**
Economic **benefits**
Political **direction**
Private sector **engagement**

◉ **Regional leadership ambition:** As the topic of the CE is gaining traction in the Latin American region, Ecuador has ambitions to stay at the forefront and take on a leadership role. The prospect of being an example for the region is compelling.

◉ **Private sector engagement:** Commitment from the private sector has contributed to stimulating ambition at a national level. In addition to signing the National Pact for the CE, private sector actors have supported various activities, including the mapping of CE projects and co-funding the white paper. They have also been engaged in relevant policy processes.

◉ **Economic benefits:** The circular economy provides a framework for a transition to a more diversified, post-oil economy based on responsible resource management. The First National CE Conference offered a forum for a critical number of key actors in Ecuador to discuss the competitive advantages offered by circular economy approaches across all productive sectors, such as reduced raw material costs and improved export conditions. The prospect of CE benefits may also be linked to the wide endorsement of the National Pact for the Circular Economy.

How the EU helped kick off a CE process in Ecuador

The motivation of the EU Delegation (EUD) to Ecuador to introduce the CE concept and co-drive the country's transition process was twofold: firstly, the EUD had a strong track record in supporting waste management projects.

Since 2006, 30 relevant projects with a total volume of over €17.5 million were supported by the EU. Consequently, there was a wealth of experience and a vast network of partners relevant to the CE context.

Secondly, there was an opportunity to support a more organised national transition to a circular economy as relevant interest from national actors (notably the government) rapidly grew.

EU support at a glance

- ◉ Sponsoring a permanent working group on integrated solid waste management
- ◉ Organisation and funding of the First National Conference on the Circular Economy
- ◉ Provision of technical assistance to the Ecuadorian Government via the SWITCH to Green Facility for the elaboration of a white paper on the circular economy
- ◉ Launch of a massive communication campaign on the CE
- ◉ Funding of various courses for the CE to establish academic education
- ◉ Facilitation of an expert network
- ◉ Close support for a pilot private sector investment involving an EU company (Life for Tyres)

Lessons learnt

Over the last two years, the close involvement of the EUD in accompanying Ecuador in its transition towards a circular economy led to the following lessons learnt:



Understanding the motivation of key actors makes it possible to recognise the topics that drive the debate within relevant sectors and identify factors, thereby encouraging CE-related actions among stakeholders.



Identifying a champion/key player/influencer/coordinator is instrumental in successfully integrating the CE across all relevant sectors and securing a high level of participation at all key milestones. Getting the buy-in and leadership of the Vice-President's Office has been one of the greatest successes of the EUD in Ecuador.



Conducting a deep analysis of the country context and its actors opens

up multiple entry points, including at the policy and private sector levels.



Creating a common and widespread understanding of the CE enables ownership

over the topic among stakeholders, facilitates an informed dialogue and enables actors to formulate coherent strategies.



Committing to co-lead the process as an EU Delegation (even with limited resources)

provides an impetus to reach the desired milestones and become a strong partner to the government in the CE transition process.

Future steps

To fully unfold, the CE transition would also need to expand to the local government level. The national CE strategy will benefit from taking municipal and provincial structures into account, including measures for the household level. Improving cross-sector coordination and participation is another key to success, as the shift to a CE touches on a vast number of economic sectors and actors.

Certification and labelling schemes need to be professionalised and regularised, to both ensure the quality of CE approaches and build trust among consumers. To expand CE, public and private investments for increasing research, innovation and adoption of new technology need to be facilitated.

The banking sector will require support to be able to quickly adapt to these developments and also absorb and implement these specialised funds.



Green and circular growth

A uniting vision for the Kyrgyz Republic

The Kyrgyz Republic is a land-locked, lower-middle-income country in Central Asia with a primarily rural population and significant employment in agriculture. In recent years, its economy has experienced steady economic growth driven by resource extraction, services and private consumption. Rising resource consumption and material flows, inadequate infrastructure development, and demographic growth have put pressure on natural resources and contributed to environmental pollution. Air and water pollution have in turn contributed to health risks among Kyrgyz citizens, causing almost 14% of all annual deaths in 2016 ([UNIDO 2019](#)).

The country is vulnerable to climate change and extreme weather events, including drought, mudslides and flooding, with implications for agriculture and the energy sector. Climate change adaptation has been on the government agenda for some time. After political unrest sparked by unemployment, increasing poverty and inequality, the Kyrgyz Republic emerged in 2010 in a more democratically-oriented political system that envisioned sustainable development for the country.

On track to a green, notably circular economy

At the Rio+20 conference, the Kyrgyz Republic reiterated its commitment to sustainable development by promoting green economy priorities, including reducing consumption, introducing low-waste and resource-efficient technologies, and recycling waste. In 2013, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development of the Kyrgyz Republic (2013-2017) and related action plan were approved, including provisions for assessing the costs and benefits of mineral resource extraction, and provisions for promoting the efficient use of water resources, sustainable land use, energy saving and energy efficiency. Since then, green economy considerations have been integrated into national legislation, including in laws on environmental protection, atmospheric air, renewable energy sources, public health and the forest code.

The implementation of green economy objectives gained further impetus through climate finance. The [Climate Investment Programme](#) (2018), for example, strengthens resilience in (among others) food production and agricultural practices, in water and energy supply infrastructure, in buildings, healthcare and mining, as well as in forestry and biodiversity. In 2018, the Kyrgyz Republic

adopted a [National Development Strategy](#) 2018-2040 that envisions a future with “negative CO₂ emissions”, as the “greenest country in the region”.

A year later, the Sustainable Development Strategy in Industry (2019-2023) was endorsed, acknowledging the need to increase environmentally-friendly investments while developing a comprehensive approach towards recycling, to decrease the amount of industrial waste.

The enacted Green Economy Development Programme (2019-2023) focuses on seven priority sectors, including green energy, green agriculture, green industry, low-carbon and environmentally-friendly transportation, sustainable tourism, waste management, and green cities. In support of the transition process to a green economy, it is envisaged to promote sustainable financing, fiscal incentives, sustainable public procurement and capacity building and awareness raising.

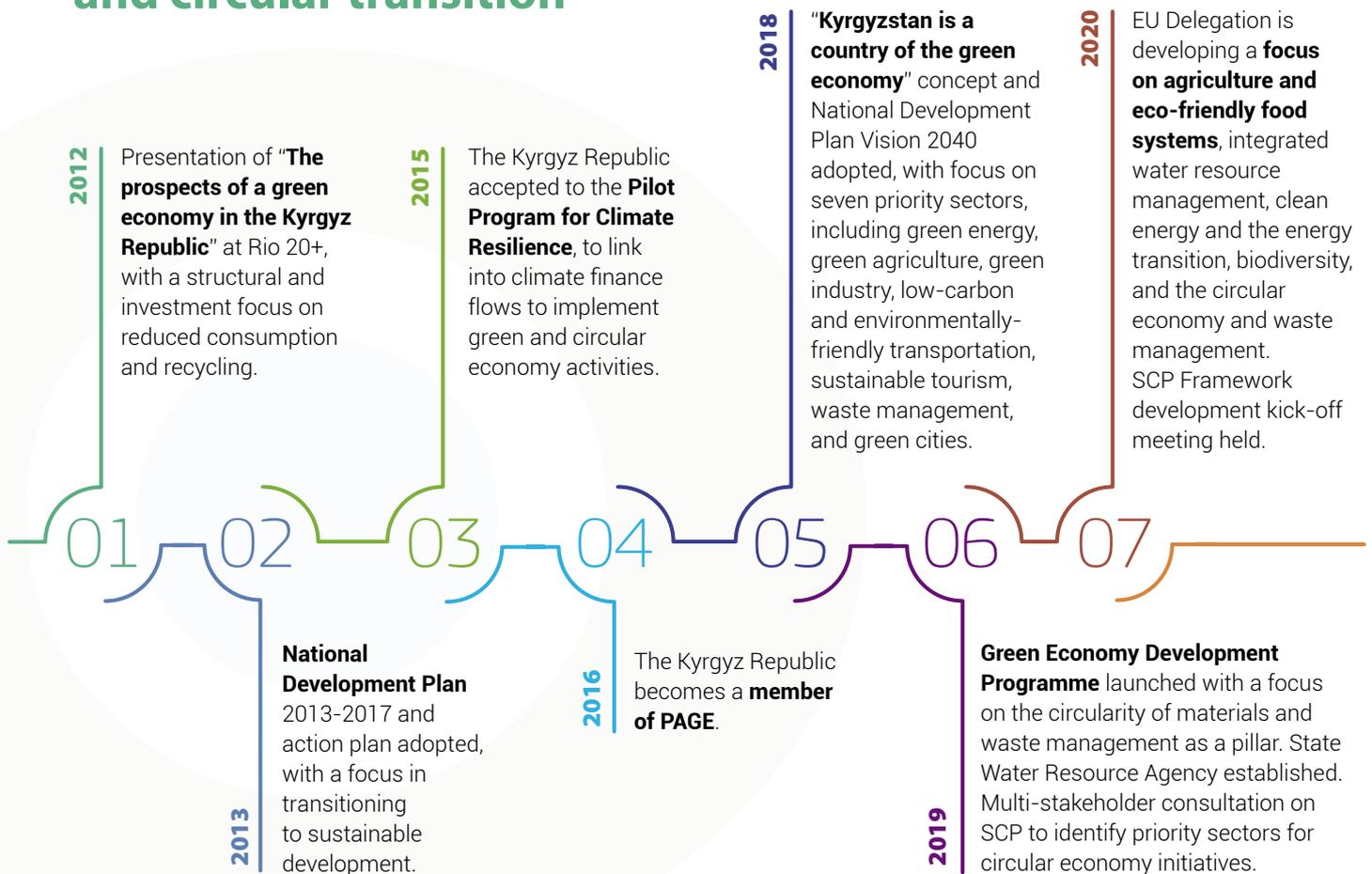
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The programme and accompanying Action Plan include circular economy considerations highlighting waste management as a focus area for the circularity of materials and aiming to reduce emissions from waste burning and dumping. They also prioritise green manufacturing, with particular emphasis on (among others) waste and resource/energy efficiency. In 2020, a Coordination Council on Green Economy and Climate Change was formed to merge coordination on climate change and the green economy with the Climate Finance Centre as its Secretariat.

A National Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production is under discussion and is envisioned to recommend amendments to current legislation and frameworks that would promote a circular economy approach to the green transition, particularly in the agri-food and construction sectors.



Key milestones for the green and circular transition



Drivers for the green, notably circular shift

◉ **Supporting social cohesion.** Improving quality of life across various areas of the country, including in areas with high levels of poverty and with ethnic minorities, has been a priority, particularly given the social unrest in 2010. A transition to a green and circular economy is seen as a vehicle for decent job creation, leading to the reduction of inequalities.

◉ **Building human capital.** Investing in human capital that enables a growing young population to understand, invest in and manage more modern and greener technologies will create capacity for green and circular economy jobs. It expands opportunities for the fast-growing young population and, at the same time, promotes the transfer of low-carbon technologies.

◉ **Tackling pollution.** The pollution of water and air has significant impact on the health of many Kyrgyz citizens as well as on the economy. By addressing pollution, the government aims to protect citizens and reduce economic losses.

◉ **Protecting ecosystems as cultural, natural and economic assets.** Preventing the loss of essential natural ecosystems drives policy making as ecosystems connect generations, offer services to local societies and economies, and guarantee future economic growth, especially with regard to branding the Kyrgyz Republic as an eco-tourism destination and an organic agriculture country.

◉ **Realising the potential of natural resources.** The Kyrgyz Republic's topography allows for the use of significant water resources for hydropower that can support both growth and the Kyrgyz Republic's positioning within the region as a green economic power.

◉ **Building resilience into important economic sectors.** Addressing vulnerabilities in forestry, agriculture, water, and other sectors is an important trigger for the shift to a green and circular economy.

DRIVERS

Need for **social cohesion**
Building **human capital**
Protecting **human health**
Building a **resilient economy**
Using **available resources**
Protecting **ecosystems**

How EU actions support the Kyrgyz Republic going green and circular

In 2016, the Kyrgyz Republic became a member country of the EU co-funded Partnership for Green Economy (PAGE). PAGE supported the development of the Green Economy Development Programme 2019-2023 and Action Plan. Since joining PAGE, the Kyrgyz Republic has held five Green Economy Weeks to build partnerships and exhibit green economy projects, and has also entered into a South-South Cooperation with Mongolia.

In 2019, the EU SWITCH-Asia Programme, the EU Delegation, and the Ministry of the Economy consulted with key actors to identify sustainable consumption and production needs, and priority areas to further the circular economy delivery. The priority sectors identified include the agri-food sector, clean and low carbon transport, and energy efficiency in the building sector. The identification of priority sectors for SCP practices and the circular economy feeds into the development of a Framework for a National Action Plan on SCP.

The EU Delegation has also provided support to the private sector, for example through the KyrSEFF+ project, which extends credit to households and SMEs for energy efficiency projects. The project is implemented in partnership with local banks and as a blended project with the EBRD.

EU support at a glance

- ◉ Supporting the discussion of a National Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production via the [SWITCH-Asia Programme](#)
- ◉ Support for the private sector, for example through the [KyrSEFF+](#) project or the [EU Central Asia Invest Programme](#)
- ◉ The EU (through the EUROPEAN BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT or EBRD) funds critical solid waste investments resulting in an improved level of solid waste services
- ◉ The EU (through the EBRD) funds the [Kyrgyzstan Climate Resilience Water Supply Project](#), and (through the EIB) provides financial support to small and medium-sized enterprises in the agri-food sector
- ◉ The EU-funded [PAGE](#) programme supported the elaboration of the country's Green Economy Development Programme 2019-2023

Lessons learnt

The EUD has gathered several insights from the country's green (and, more recently, circular) economy transition process:



Coordination and integration have been important at many levels - among EU cooperation sectors, among development partners, and in the approach to green economy topics. Co-operation among development partners has helped each partner to focus on those areas where they bring added value.



Support from development partners has helped establish appropriate structures within government institutions and played an important role in supporting the development of capacities within institutions, including by adopting an integrated approach and contributing to the implementation of relevant sector strategies.



Partnerships between the EU and finance institutions have leveraged both actors' strengths to deliver results. Different types of instruments implemented by the EU complement infrastructure support funded by financial institutions like the EIB or EBRD.



Green economy programmes should also take into account other cross-cutting issues and priorities, such as digitalisation. Interlinkages can form new opportunities for partnerships.



Events such as the Green Economy Week showcasing the efforts of various projects and initiatives are helpful to align and coordinate across sectors.

Future steps

Whereas a supportive policy environment for green economy is in place, further steps are needed to fully unfold a transition to circular economy practices. A transition to a green, notably circular economy would benefit from linking policy objectives to a budget to ensure implementation. Expanding public investments on a green and circular economy programme would need sufficient sources of finance, including climate financing and beyond. Infrastructure investments can offer entry points, for example in the agriculture sector, where deficient irrigation infrastructure leads to inefficient water usage and does not allow for water re-use.

To ensure resource recovery, measures should be put in place to address the financing needs of building, professionalising, and upgrading recycling facilities at landfills, even when economic feasibility of investing in these facilities is low. Enacting reforms in the energy sector can accelerate efficiency improvements. Tackling potential negative impacts through complementary measures is important to address concerns over public unrest with increased tariffs, which have hampered efforts so far. Linkages between the priority sectors – for example between water resources, energy, and food security, would benefit the green / circular economy frameworks. Coordination across the priority sectors is crucial to reaching the objectives of a green, notably circular economy.



Mongolia goes circular

The stepping stones

As a resource-rich country, Mongolia relies on mining for economic growth; mining comprises 30% of GDP and 80% of exports. The country has witnessed population growth, urbanisation and industrialisation over the past decade. Lack of export diversification makes the economy vulnerable to commodity price swings and declines in external demand. Poverty remains relatively high, with more than a quarter of the population living below the poverty line in 2018. Despite the harsh continental climate that limits production, agriculture is a significant economic activity in Mongolia, with much of the population linked – either directly or indirectly – to employment in animal husbandry. Desertification, droughts, harsh winters and the degradation of pastureland threaten livestock herding and linked industries. These climactic changes are affecting rural livelihood activities and triggering urbanisation with a growth rate of around 1.9% annually. Mongolia's cities, notably Ulaanbaatar, are experiencing a construction boom and suffer from dangerous levels of air pollution during the winter when residents burn raw coal for heating in temperatures that fall below -40°C. Mongolia currently has delicate and relatively healthy ecosystems, although conservation costs may rise in the future due to urbanisation, infrastructure development, climate change and mining.



Integrating circular economy approaches into policy

In 2013, Mongolia was one of the first countries to join the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE). Over the years, the country has shown a strong commitment to greening its economy, which has gradually also included circular practices. An amendment to the Law on Waste (2017) introduced the circular economy into the government policy framework. The complementing [Mongolia National Waste Management Improvement Strategy and Action Plan \(2017-2030\)](#)¹ strived to conserve raw materials, reduce waste at the source and establish the 3R principle (reduce, reuse, recycle). The strategy embraced – among others – the concept of extended producer responsibility as well as mechanisms for converting waste to value-added products.

The [Sustainable Development Vision 2030](#) aimed to preserve Mongolia's ecological balance. The vision further prioritised the transition to a circular economy through the promotion of resource efficiency in production methods at a sector level. Further laws and policies enacted to support the transition to a green and circular economy include the ban on coal burning in Ulaanbaatar (2019), the ban on single use plastic bags (2019), and the [National Sustainable Finance Roadmap of Mongolia \(2018\)](#),

which aims to re-orientate and increase green investment flows that contribute to the creation of a low-carbon, climate-resilient and circular economy. A [Mongolia Green Taxonomy](#), developed by the Mongolian Sustainable Finance Association, provides a framework of activities that contribute to resource conservation and pollution prevention, integrating circular practices such as energy efficiency and waste recycling.

In 2020, the Mongolian government adopted Vision 2050, a long-term policy document replacing the Sustainable Development Vision 2030. Vision 2050 outlines nine fundamental goals to which circular models can contribute, such as: protecting and reclaiming the environment and ecosystems; increasing productivity through resource-efficient and low-waste advanced technologies and innovative products and services; and encouraging eco-friendly lifestyles. Sub-development goals further include preventing water resource scarcity and contributing to international climate change mitigation efforts. The goals outlined in Vision 2050 form the basis of the Government Action Plan 2020-2025.

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green

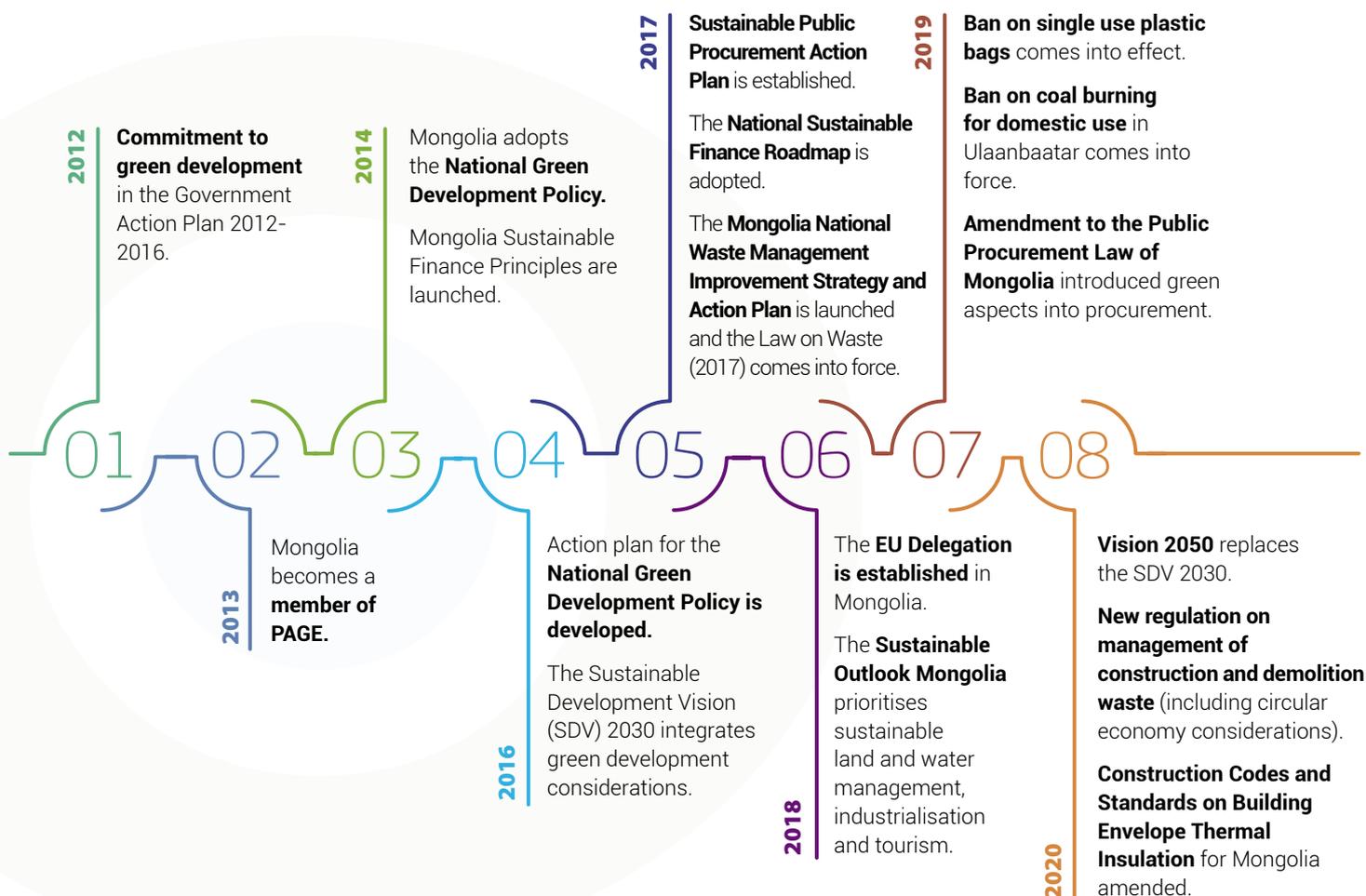
1. Other relevant sector-specific policy initiatives include the second National Biodiversity Program approved in 2015, the National Program on Water (2010-2021), the National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in Mongolia (NPACD, 2010-2020), the National Action Program on Climate Change (NAPCC, 2011-2021), the National Green Belt Program (2005-2035), and the National Program on the Conservation of Rare and Endangered Animals (2012-2021)

In the same year, the Ministry of Construction and Urban Development adopted new regulations on [recycling demolition and construction waste](#), including regulations for classifying, recycling, reusing, or appropriately disposing of waste from the construction and demolition of buildings. Together with standards for secondary materials from demolition waste, this is a step towards advancing circular resource use in the sector.

Progress towards a circular economy is also based on the foundations laid down by the [National Green Development Policy \(2014\)](#), the Green Action Plan 2016-2030, and the [Sustainable Public Procurement Action Plan \(2017\)](#). The [National Green Development Policy](#) aspires to achieve participatory and inclusive economic growth through measures like the introduction of the 'green development areas' model in national parks and natural and cultural heritage sites, by limiting mining and industrial activities while developing eco-tourism and traditional livestock husbandry. It envisions economic incentives to increase the productivity of natural resource use, including payment for ecosystem services to herders contributing to pasture degradation prevention and water source maintenance. Additionally, the National Green Development Policy puts forward measures to (among others) introduce technologies for the recycling, reuse and retreatment of wastewater up to permissible standard levels (thus limiting the use of ground water for industrial purposes), and to promote surface water accumulation and utilisation, including rainwater harvesting.



Key milestones for the green and circular transition



Drivers for the circular shift

🕒 **Diversifying the economy and creating jobs:** Acknowledging the need to increase the resilience of the economy and address volatility and risks related to Mongolia's economic dependence on mining and traditional livestock husbandry, both the National Green Development Policy and the Sustainable Development Vision support green and circular activities like renewable energy, eco-tourism and sustainable agricultural value chains as a means to diversify the economy and create jobs and growth.

🕒 **Reducing air pollution and waste:** Pollution has a significant impact on citizens' health, especially in Ulaanbaatar. By tackling pollution, the government hopes to protect human health and reduce economic losses. Increasing energy efficiency in housing and heating systems and transitioning to alternative heating technologies are measures to reduce harmful air pollution levels. With solid waste management being a major issue in Mongolia, closing the loop of product life cycles is a key circular economy consideration towards managing resource flows and ensuring the availability of resources for future use.

DRIVERS

Diversification of the economy
(notably exports) and job creation

Reducing air pollution and waste

Securing clean water supply

Protecting ecosystems as cultural,
natural and economic assets

🕒 **Securing clean water supply:** Water scarcity threatens Mongolia's development. Reducing water pollution and securing future access to clean and safe drinking water is therefore a priority of the Mongolian Government as reflected in the National Green Development Policy's ambition for wastewater treatment and water reuse. Circular economy practices are also confirmed by the Mongolian National Technical Committee on Standardization that endorsed *Technical Requirements of Treated Wastewater Reuse* in 2019.

🕒 **Protecting ecosystems as cultural, natural and economic assets:** Preventing the loss of essential natural ecosystems drives policy making as natural-capital-dependent agriculture and animal husbandry are significant economic activities in Mongolia. The protection of ecosystems secures traditional livelihoods and employment in animal husbandry. Healthy ecosystems also allow for sustainable tourism in around 21% of the land that is protected.

How the EU helped kick-off a CE process in Mongolia

The **European Union** supports Mongolia's transition to a green and circular economy through initiatives on energy efficiency, waste management, and the circular economy. The EU SWITCH-Asia Programme provides technical and policy support on circular economy topics related to sustainable consumption and production (SCP), covering themes such as green products, plastics, recycling and waste as well as construction. SWITCH-Asia has been a catalyst for Mongolia's New Regulation on Construction and Demolition Waste (CDW) Management, paving the way for the use of secondary materials in the buildings and construction sector. The SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility has undertaken multi-stakeholder consultations and provided training on Sustainable/Green Public Procurement. Recently, the SWITCH-Asia SCP Facility developed an SCP Baseline Study to map relevant policies and stakeholders, and identify practices to support increased awareness on SCP.

With the [Economic Governance for Equitable Growth \(EG4EG\)](#), the EU funded a project aiming to strengthen the economic governance of revenues from Mongolia's mineral wealth towards sustainable development. The EU co-funded [Partnership for Action on the Green Economy \(PAGE\)](#) also supports the country's transition with macro-economic planning and monitoring, mapping of the national policies on the green economy to SDGs, policy development, and training and capacity building.

The **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development** focuses on economic diversification, responsible mining, and the development of institutions, infrastructure and the private sector. Relevant blending projects with contributions by the EBRD and the EU include the Ulaanbaatar District Heating Project, the Green Cities programme – through which the EBRD supports the Capital City Governors' Office on a new Green City Action Plan – and the GrCF Ulaanbaatar Solid Waste Modernisation Project, which contributes to CE objectives by introducing proper waste management practices and investing in a Construction

and Demolition Waste Plant (CDW). The Mongolian Sustainable Energy Financing Facility (MonSEFF) is a credit line developed by the EBRD to enable the partner banks in Mongolia to finance businesses seeking to invest in energy efficiency.

The EU-funded Green Economy Coalition (GEC) Dialogues supported the Economic Policy & Competitiveness Research Centre in Mongolia in building networks of civil society, business and government that drew up future economic scenarios and policy roadmaps to inform decision-making, demonstrated the value of green investment, and helped local entrepreneurs access finance for innovative green, notably circular projects.

EU support at a glance

- 🕒 The EU SWITCH-Asia Programme has provided support through grants and the SCP Facility.
- 🕒 EU and EBRD blending projects include the [Green Cities Programme](#), [District Heating](#), the [Solid Waste Modernisation Programme](#) and the [MonSEFF](#).
- 🕒 The EU-funded [Economic Governance for Equitable Growth \(EG4EG\)](#) project aims to enhance sustainability considerations in economic governance of revenues from the mining sector.
- 🕒 The EU co-funded PAGE supports policy development and capacity building.
- 🕒 The EU-funded GEC Dialogues organised multi-stakeholder platforms informing policy, demonstrating the value of green investment and helping local entrepreneurs materialise innovative green projects.

Lessons learnt

The EU Delegation to Mongolia has identified practices that leverage the policy and stakeholder landscape to accelerate green and circular economy topics.



Ensure interest of and close coordination with the relevant focal point and line ministries. Finding an entry point for the green or circular economy narrative that is of interest to the government is crucial; this is likely to come from somewhere other than environmental sectors, for example, from infrastructure development. Coordination at the government level is equally important to the sustainability of a project and to ensure implementation of the measures proposed.



Integrate circularity coherently across the EU's portfolio. A coherent portfolio minimises overlap and increases efficiency of spending. By building on existing projects and stakeholder experience, a coherent integration of the circular economy in new actions can be achieved. In the context of a call for proposals, such as that of the EU SWITCH-Asia Programme, a relevant engagement strategy has been successfully promoted by encouraging potential applicants to engage with ongoing projects.



Ensure coordination among multiple stakeholders. In Mongolia, multi-stakeholder working groups as for example promoted by the EU supported GEC dialogues project, bring together development partners working including government bodies, civil society, and the private sector on topics like air pollution.

"It is important to have thorough involvement of the line ministry when developing a project. Otherwise, the initiative becomes standalone with no follow up."

Byambaragchaa Magvandorj,
Project Manager - EU Delegation to Mongolia

Future steps

Despite a strong policy landscape for the transition to a green and circular economy, Mongolia lacks progress in implementation, as reflected in the country's ranking (120th out of 130 countries) in the 2018 Global Green Economy Index. To fully unfold, the transition would also need to address current inefficiencies in regulatory and institutional frameworks, financial constraints, skills gaps, and technology barriers. Increasing access to finance and awareness in the private sector can facilitate the implementation of initiatives outlined in the national plans for green and circular economy development – an effective strategy with SMEs e.g. in the construction sector. To raise awareness on resource efficiency is also key to the country, where 17 kilograms of natural resources is used for every dollar of economic activity, compared to the region's average of three kilograms per US dollar.



Uganda goes green and circular

Milestones in the transition



Uganda is endowed with significant natural resources – including fertile soil, oil, reserves of minerals and reserves of critical metals such as cobalt and rare earth elements. Natural capital is vital for the country's development, being the backbone of a flourishing agriculture, tourism industry and related value chains. Sustainable development is, however, challenged by increasing pressures from a rapidly growing and urbanising population. The annual population growth rate of 3% (one of the world's highest) and associated growing agricultural needs are among the key factors contributing to deforestation, soil erosion and reduced wetlands cover. 700,000 young people enter the work force every year with bleak employment prospects, often having to work in subsistence agriculture, further impacting the environment and leaving their livelihoods vulnerable to climatic shocks.

The elaboration of the country's **Vision 2040** provided the foundations (as early as 2007) for a "green economy and clean environment where the ecosystem is sustainably managed and the liveability of the urban systems is greatly improved". A few years later, when integrating the SDGs into the [Second National Development Plan](#) (NDP II) 2015/16-2019/20, the government took significant steps towards green growth, including the adoption of a National Climate Change Policy (2015).

Two studies, on the "[Economic Assessment of the Impacts of Climate Change in Uganda](#)" (2016) and on "[Achieving Uganda's Development Ambition](#)" (2016), guided the development of the [Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy](#) (UGGDS). A consultative process led by a multi-sector National Task Force prepared the UGGDS (2017) and complementing Roadmap, focusing on five areas of investment: agriculture, natural capital management, green cities (urban development), transport and energy. Sector-specific strategies and policies, such as the **Sustainable Energy 4 All** action agenda 2015-2030, and **Nationally**

Appropriate Mitigation Actions, have further supported the green economy transition. Relevant ongoing policy processes also include the **National Climate Change Law**.

Discussions on the green growth agenda in Uganda have been increasingly influenced by the circular economy (CE) transition narrative. Ministries from various sectors have progressively acknowledged the benefits of valuing waste as a resource, for example by bringing in circularity considerations to landfill design. The private sector has shown a growing interest in **CE investments**. This interest has particularly focused on **industrialisation and urbanisation**, as reflected in the [Third National Development Plan \(NDP III\) 2020-2025](#), and is expected to be integrated into the **National Low Carbon Industrialisation Strategy 2020-2040**.

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green

Uganda's path to a greener and more circular economy

Translating international targets into national development plans:

As the 2030 Agenda took effect globally, the Ugandan Government used this opportunity to renew its commitment to sustainable development, including the green growth agenda. The integration of the SDGs into national planning signalled the transition to an inclusive green economy and provided an entry point for the CE transition narrative.

Evidence-based decisions/informing policy decision-making:

Extensive research and analysis carried out for the Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy improved understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to the green growth (and, increasingly, the CE) model. Relevant discussions pinpointed the need to improve the investment climate, to invest in health and education, as well as to improve agricultural productivity, develop high-value services and industry, provide access to modern energy, and harness the opportunities from urbanisation.

Working with stakeholders to coherently shape green/circular economy policy:

A participatory approach to green policy processes guaranteed a wide stakeholder ownership and engagement with the green/circular economy transition. Inclusiveness targeted multiple functions in policy formulation, including the mobilisation of a multi-sector National Task Force in strategy development (UGGDS), and the engagement of civil society in both the implementation of policy and the creation of enabling policy conditions for Uganda's transformation to an inclusive green economy (e.g. policy dialogues promoted by the Green Economy Coalition).

Formulating strategy and roadmap:

The [Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy](#) (2017) provides policy options that enhance and exploit synergies between economic growth, environmental sustainability and social equity, reconciling the existing economic, social and environmental conflicts. The strategy's focus on areas with the highest green growth potential in terms of investment comprises agriculture, natural capital management, green cities (urban development), transport and energy.

Mainstreaming the green growth and circular economy agenda:

The inclusive green economy agenda, including CE considerations, is currently mainstreamed into the implementation of the Uganda NDP III, supported by the EU action "Inclusive Green Economy Uptake Programme."

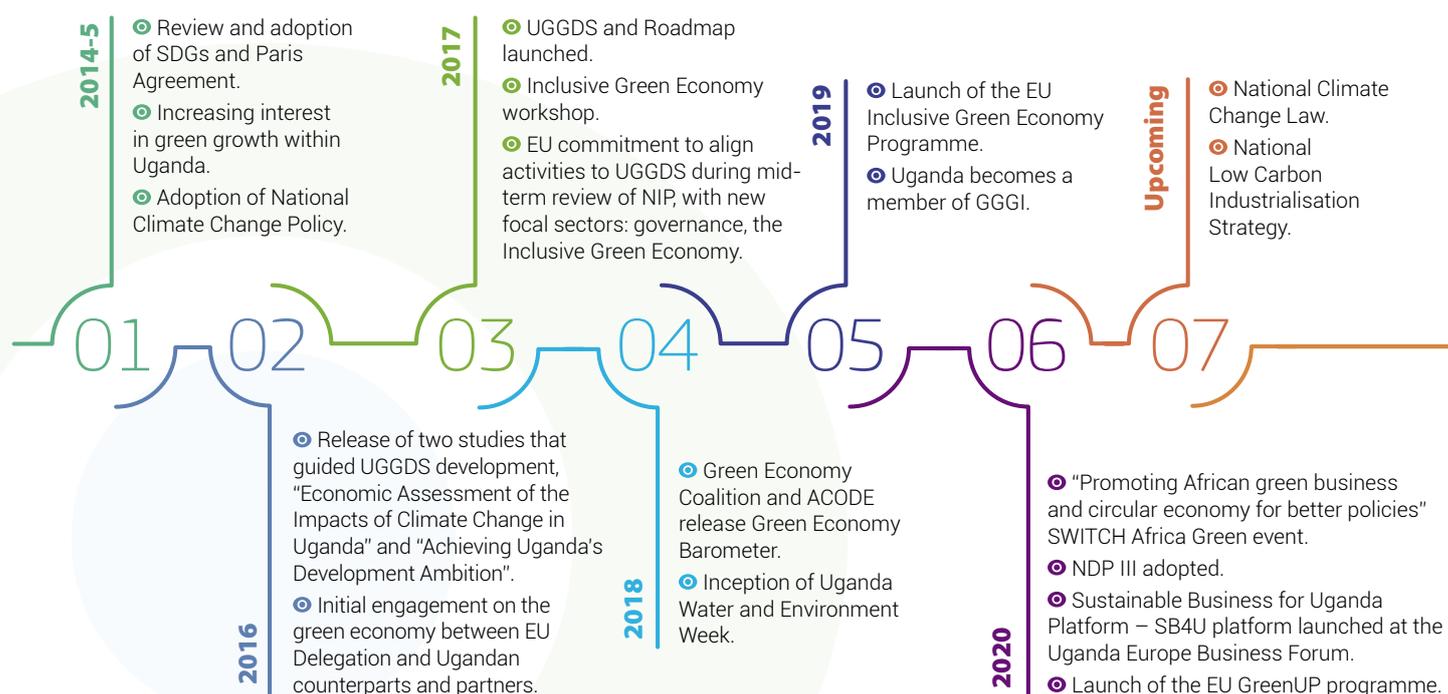
Harnessing opportunities for cooperation:

An inclusive green and more circular economy is addressed as a cross-cutting topic, spanning across several sectors and actors, embracing a culture of collaboration among the government, the private sector, civil society and development partners in Uganda.

“ Topics related to the circular economy have always been present in conversations on green growth, but have been elevated in the green growth narrative when actors have come in to demonstrate the value of closing loops in the circular economy ”

George Asiimwe, Global Green Growth Institute

Milestones for the transition



Drivers for the transition to a greener and more circular economy

🕒 **Job creation:** Implementation of the interventions outlined in the UGGDS is projected to deliver an additional 4 million green jobs in high potential sectors such as transport, energy and agriculture. The opportunity to address unemployment and a rising workforce is a key trigger for investment into a greener and more circular economy.

🕒 **Investment opportunities in low carbon development and industrialisation:** A 2016 report by the Ugandan Government indicated an opportunity for a green economy to boost GDP, deliver employment and reduce future GHG emissions by prioritising the implementation of sustainable investments. Tapping into green climate finance and leveraging private sector investments in green sectors – such as sustainable industrialisation, agriculture and city planning, notably waste to wealth initiatives – may both contribute to Uganda's transition to a middle-income country and support job creation.

DRIVERS

Job creation
Economic opportunities
Green urbanisation
Valuing waste
and natural capital

🕒 **Improved quality of urban life through sustainable urbanisation:** There is a strain on infrastructure, including water and sanitation infrastructure, as the population moves to cities. There is interest in exploring green city planning, particularly in circular economy solutions for Kampala and for secondary cities, to prepare for future pressures.

🕒 **Business opportunities from valuing waste and natural capital:** This trigger comes predominately from the private sector, which looks at opportunities for closed loop production, either through SMEs developing waste-to-resource business models and products or through larger companies contributing to sustainable resource use of their inputs, e.g. water.

How the EU supports a just transition to a greener and more circular economy

As Uganda's interest in green growth developed, the EU Delegation to Uganda underwent a similar process of growing appreciation for a green development agenda. Following pilot actions such as the projects implemented in Uganda with support from the SWITCH Africa Green Programme, the EU Delegation shifted the focal sectors of the National Indicative Programme to (1) governance, and (2) the Inclusive Green Economy.

The launch of the External Investment Plan in 2017 with new instruments to leverage private investments offered opportunities to build a programme that linked public and private sector actions. The EU Delegation aimed to further develop green economy awareness and capacities both in-house (EU Delegation staff) and in partner organisations in Uganda with an inspirational learning and networking event, the Inclusive Green Economy Workshop (2017). Organised under the DG DEVCO Methodological Knowledge Programme with support from the SWITCH to Green Facility, the workshop brought together representatives from the EU, international organisations, national and local governments, the private sector, civil society and financial institutions.

The Inclusive Green Economy focal sector comprises EU projects on **access to energy, inclusive green city planning and access to finance**. In compiling actions, the EU Delegation to Uganda was able to build on existing projects that contribute to green and inclusive economy objectives, address the environmental and social impacts of ongoing projects, and engage with other development partners. Many programme components have therefore been co-financed with financing from other actors.

The EUD funds the "[Inclusive Green Economy Uptake Programme \(GreenUP\)](#)". The programme looks at making Uganda's policy and

regulatory framework conducive to private sector involvement in the green and circular economy. It addresses Uganda's business environment, investment climate and value chain development.

More recently, frameworks taken into consideration by the EU Delegation to Uganda when developing the Inclusive Green Economy programmes have included the European Green Deal roadmap and the EU Taxonomy for sustainable investment. In March 2020, the first ever Uganda-Europe Business Forum (3/2020) was conducted with EU support. At the forum the Sustainable Business for Uganda Platform (SB4U) was launched with a view to facilitating a structured dialogue between investors and the private sector.

EU support at a glance

- 🕒 Supporting the action "[Promoting Inclusive Green Economy in Uganda](#)"
- 🕒 Conducting the [Uganda Inclusive Green Economy Workshop](#)
- 🕒 Supporting projects on **access to energy, inclusive green cities planning and access to finance**
- 🕒 Support for the [Uganda Europe Business Forum](#) and the Sustainable Business for Uganda Platform – SB4U
- 🕒 Supporting the EU action "[Inclusive Green Economy Uptake Programme \(GreenUP\)](#)"
- 🕒 Supporting research and advocacy for an Inclusive Green Economy under the [Green Economy Dialogues project](#)

Lessons learnt

The close involvement of the EU Delegation in accompanying Uganda in its transition to an inclusive green (and, more recently, a circular) economy led to the following lessons learnt:



Rely on partners who are active in the inclusive green and circular economy to help map the sector.

The EU Delegation to Uganda navigated the complexity of the green economy environment by leveraging the experience of partners in the identifying options for potential programme components and by viewing the just transition as an ongoing process.



Start cooperation on the green and circular economy even before having established a strictly defined terminology for relevant actions or a shared understanding of the terms among stakeholders.

A broad understanding of the processes involved that encompasses multiple types of projects is sufficient to get started. A more detailed operational agenda can be subsequently developed as a clearer definition of the transition becomes broadly accepted.



Use the topic of access to finance to promote synergies across programme components.

Leveraging private sector financing is quite a new approach and can address challenges seen in multiple sectors. Green and circular economy projects can benefit from both blended finance operations and technical assistance (or other support) to local banks, resulting in improved access to finance to MSMEs across value chains.



Shifting the focus of cooperation to a green and more circular economy takes time and should be seen as an ongoing process.

It takes time for awareness to evolve and for social progress in factors such as education and equality to create the conditions necessary for engagement of the population and the private sector. It also takes time to make appropriate implementation arrangements.

Future steps

Making the Ugandan economy greener and more circular requires additional efforts. **Attracting green climate finance into the country** is necessary to ensure that the policies can be implemented.

Further **mainstreaming of the green and circular economy agenda** can facilitate outreach in multiple sectors and across public and private actors. **Financial institutions need capacity building** to enable them to increase lending to the private sector, especially MSMEs, and to bring a green, notably circular, lens to this lending.

When implementing green and low-carbon approaches to urbanisation and industrialisation, **ensuring inclusion** is key to ensure the poorest are not left out. Support to the recently launched **SB4U Platform** can further enhance the potential for an impactful transition, especially in terms of sustainable job creation, trade and investment.



Senegal accelerates circular practices



Senegal has emerged as a major economic centre in Francophone West Africa with one of the highest GDP growth rates in Africa between 2014 and 2018 (above 6% annually). The country's economy largely hinges on the services sector, with growth driven by exports and investment. Natural resources such as fish, livestock, groundnuts and minerals also play an important role in the economy.¹ Rapid urbanisation and migration to urban areas on the coast have increased demand for land, water and infrastructure, and have led to coastal ecosystem degradation, air pollution and land/water contamination due to inappropriate waste disposal.

Senegal has emphasised the importance of the transition to a green and circular economy, among others, through the [Plan Sénégal Emergent \(PSE\)](#) (2014), including its phase 2 [Priority Action Plan 2019-2023](#) and its environmental component (Green PSE). Relevant priority actions include interventions in the energy mix to promote renewable energy (solar and wind), ecosystem protection (in particular, reforestation with the creation of the Senegalese Agency for Reforestation and the Great Green Wall) and a "Zero Waste Programme", which focuses on solid waste collection and treatment in urban areas. The Zero Waste Programme explicitly moves towards a circular economy and aims to reduce costs, reuse inputs, take harmful substances out of the environment and create awareness of relevant issues.

Along these policy processes, a pivotal step encouraging the country's transition was the [High-Level Conference on Circular Economy, Green Industry and Jobs \(2019\)](#) organised by the European Commission, UNIDO and the Government of Senegal, that led to the adoption of the "Dakar Vision on Circular Economy, Green Industry and Jobs" and strengthened regional engagement on the circular economy.

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1. World Bank Data: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/senegal/overview#:~:text=Economic%20overview&text=GDP%20growth%20was%205.3%25%20in,were%20the%20strongest%20growth%20drivers>.

Senegal's recipe for a circular economy

The focus on waste management and the transition to a circular economy has been corroborated by the National Programme on Waste Management, including the Project for the Promotion of Integrated Management and Economy of Solid Waste in Senegal (PROMOGED) and a recent Law on Plastic Waste ([Loi No. 2020-04](#)). The national programme consists of five components: legal and financial reforms; the development of a waste economy; improvement of solid waste management systems; inclusive, participatory and responsible management of the sector; and effective governance of the sector. This programme promotes the recovery and recycling of waste, and encourages inclusive and participatory management of waste collection. The Law on Plastic Waste aims to prevent and reduce the environmental and human health impact of single-use plastic waste. A decree on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) – under development since 2015 – has been recently promoted through [a consultation and dialogue process](#) intended to accelerate the process.

The [National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Jobs in Senegal](#) (SNPEV) 2015-2020 aims to formalise jobs in the circular economy, for example in recycling, and to transform these activities into decent jobs. As early as 2013, the [National Strategy for Economic and Social Development \(NSES\) 2013-2017](#) identified priority actions related to the circular economy: restoration of

degraded ecosystems, investment in waste infrastructure, promotion of sustainable consumption, cleaner production and sustainable tourism. Further strategies that support the transitioning to a green and circular economy in Senegal include: the [National Strategic Orientation Document on the green economy](#), the [National Action Plan for Energy Efficiency 2015-2020/2030](#), [Green Secondary Cities Development Program](#) and the [Nationally Determined Contributions \(NDCs\)](#) adopted in December 2020.



Milestones for the transition



Drivers for the circular shift

🕒 **Creating green jobs in new sectors to reduce poverty:** The National Strategy for the Promotion of Green Jobs in Senegal (SNEV), integrated into the Plan Sénégal Emergent, focused on developing and promoting new sectors for green jobs, for example around mobile kiosks with solar panels, drinking water production and the recycling of energy efficient lamps, along with other opportunities in rural waste valorisation, aquaculture, sustainable agriculture and forestry. Projects under the National Strategy mostly target unemployed and rural populations with the goal to reduce poverty.

“Renewable energy for productive use in agriculture is important as the cost of energy in Senegal is high, and the sector is particularly vulnerable to climate change. We need to look at resilience and productivity through adoption of technology and climate smart agricultural practices. In particular, this can have an impact on jobs for women and youth.”

Romain Brillie,
Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)

🕒 **Building resilience and adding value in high-employment sectors:** With sustainable agricultural practices, low carbon technologies such as solar-powered irrigation systems and reforestation programmes, Senegal is advancing the transition to a circular economy in priority sectors with a high level of employment, such as agriculture and forestry. Adopting circular economy approaches – for example through using agricultural residue or regenerative plants as sources of energy – fosters local value-added production and builds resilience in sectors vulnerable to climate change.

🕒 **Improving quality of life in urban areas:** Infrastructure in urban areas is under stress from a growing population, poor urban planning, flooding and climate change events such as heavy rainfall. These challenges drive efforts to improve urban waste management, invest in sanitation infrastructure and integrate circularity concerns into the construction sector.

🕒 **Political leadership:** The Presidency of Senegal has given political guidance. The leadership role of the president was recognised in 2017, when he became a Global Green Growth Institute green growth champion for promoting the green economy.

How EU support accelerated the switch to a CE

With the **National Indicative Programme 2014-2020** being the basis for cooperation between Senegal and the European Union, EU support through the 11th European Development Fund focused on democratic governance, sustainable agriculture development and food security, and water and sanitation. Furthermore, the EU provided support for renewable energy, water infrastructure, integrated coastal zone management and wastewater treatment in Hann Bay.

From 2021, the European Investment Bank (EIB) will be co-funding the Senegal Integrated Solid Waste Management Project, which is part of the second phase of the National Waste Management Programme. The EU has also provided finance through EIB projects on [scaling solar PV](#), and projects with circular economy advancements, such as the [transformation of degraded arable, pasture land and water irrigation systems for rice production in the Senegal River Valley](#).

EU member states have supported circular practices. Luxembourg with its' Ministry of Environment, Climate & Sustainable Development of the EU's member state funds a programme with focus on plastic waste, E-waste and domestic wastewater. Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden via GIZ and GGGI implement an energy efficiency project.

The EU co-funded Partnership for Action on the Green Economy (PAGE) has supported Senegal since 2014 to integrate the inclusive green economy into national policies, develop reforms for green jobs, promote green industries and build capacities in green skills, including by hosting National Green Economy Days (2015, 2018, and 2020) and establishing a National Platform on the Green Economy to engage stakeholders around green jobs, green finance and climate change.

The **Eurocham** has served as an entry point for dialogue with the European and Senegalese private sector. The **Eurocham** brings together European investors, with a relevant group having been established to advocate for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects and

engage Senegalese companies in the process. Indicatively, a French construction company has set up a platform to support circular economy and sustainable city initiatives to promote and reduce the carbon footprint in the construction sector.

Motivation for the European Union Delegation in Senegal to bring in a focus on the circular economy in the next programming cycle grew out of a high-level conference on “Circular Economy, Green Industries and Jobs in West Africa” held in July 2019. The conference included a Circular Economy Mission from the Director General for Environment and the Director General for International Cooperation and Development and was attended by high level representatives from the Senegalese government. The conference was jointly held by the Republic of Senegal, the member countries of ECOWAS, the UNIDO and the European Commission. It was co-chaired by the Ministry of Industries and the Ministry of Environment.

EU support at a glance

- 🕒 Projects on waste recovery and waste management infrastructure
- 🕒 Projects on water and sanitation, renewable energy, integrated coastal zone management, agriculture and food security
- 🕒 Support via the EU co-funded Partnership on Green Economy in policy processes and event organisation, and the establishment of a National Platform on the Green Economy
- 🕒 Support to the high-level conference “Circular Economy, Green Industries and Jobs in West Africa”
- 🕒 Support to the private sector via Eurocham

Lessons learnt

From recent EU support for a circular economy, the EU Delegation has drawn the following lessons:



Align with national and institutional strategic priorities:

Alignment to the [Plan Sénégal Emergent \(PSE\)](#) and Green PSE, as well as the adopted [NDC](#), have provided entry points for discussions on the circular economy. Furthermore, this has enabled conversations on green and circular components of growth to continue.



Establish a conducive regulatory environment

to facilitate private sector contributions to the transition. In Senegal, the e-waste sector is a good example of the importance of a clear regulatory framework, the lack of which currently hinders full engagement by private companies.



Utilise multiple entry points to sustainably advance the circular economy agenda:

Links to work under the governance portfolio, for example, have also provided entry points for discussion with other actors, such as the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Trade. For the EU Delegation to Senegal, Eurocham has been an entry point for dialogue with the European and Senegalese private sector.

Future steps

To evolve completely, the CE transition needs to remain **high on the political agenda**; this calls for coordination and for raising awareness among stakeholders. The CE transition also requires an expansion to the **local government level**. Political leadership at the national level needs to translate into action within local municipalities and *collectivités*. In this context, actors at the local level would benefit from **resources in terms of time, investment, staff and technical support**. As circular economy topics often span across sectors and topics, **clear roles and responsibilities between ministries** would facilitate the transition. Furthermore, efforts are needed to **change perceptions of private sector actors** on the trade-off between profit and environmental impact as part of the private sector remains unconvinced of the economic benefits of transitioning to green and circular activities. Within a context of many competing priorities and recovery of the economy, an opportunity exists **to integrate circular economy considerations into building back efforts** as a means to enhance resilience and sustainability.



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Further information and support:

[EU Circular Economy Action Plan](#)

EU Circular Economy [Staff working document 'Leading the way to a global circular economy: state of play and outlook'](#)

DG INTPA publication (2020) '[Supporting the circular economy: illustrations from the EU SWITCH programmes](#)' and [miniwebsite](#)

SWITCH to Green Facility: www.switchtogreen.eu

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