



Alliance  
for Circular<sup>o</sup>  
Economy  
Solutions

ACES



A circular economy, which keeps resources in use for as long as possible through reuse, repair and remanufacturing, will generate new jobs and revenues. It does this through product innovations and the creation of new business models.

The Alliance for Circular Economy Solutions (ACES) is a unique and powerful new advocate in Europe for ambitious circular economy policy.

It is led by a partnership of influential Belgian, Dutch, British and German think tanks and business networks. Our goal is to use knowledge, evidence and our business experience to secure policies that improve the resource efficiency and competitiveness of European economies.

We are focusing on three areas where strong EU policy can unlock and accelerate circular business models:

1.  
Less waste by design

Smart companies already reduce waste through innovative design, but there is potential to do much more. Better design can enable recycling of critical materials, and longer lasting products. ACES partner De Groene Zaak has looked at policies to boost circular design, concluding that both ecodesign and fiscal measures will be necessary.<sup>1</sup> The EU's Ecodesign Directive has achieved huge energy efficiency savings and, as many businesses recognise, it could be the catalyst for the transition towards greater resource efficiency, requiring manufacturers to design products for easier reuse and repair. This would encourage more innovative and competitive manufacturers, to respond to resource market volatility and serve the needs of emerging markets with lower material demand.

## 2.

### New markets for secondary materials

Europe's market for secondary materials (derived from recycling) is held back by low quality materials, lack of standards and poor information on material contents and flows, which limits demand and trade. The ACES partners believe that ambitious policy should create a single market for secondary materials. Measures, such as improved definitions and information on waste and secondary materials and new design requirements to promote reuse and reparability, would provide manufacturers with the supplies they need to reuse resources and cut waste.

## 3.

### Enabling innovation

Europe's innovative SMEs can develop new products and processes that use resources more sustainably. But, to expand this market, new incentives are needed, for example through public procurement, increasing the value of materials and the cost of waste, and by financing new business models.



## Saving resources for the future

By keeping materials and their value in the economy, there will be less pressure on terrestrial and marine environments as there will be less need for extraction. Resource scarcity and price volatility will be avoided, while keeping a sustainable flow of resources for the future. It will also save energy and water, cut greenhouse gas emissions and help companies save money, while addressing policy targets and sustainable development goals. European economies will be more able to function within the limits of planetary boundaries and support public goods. ACES is providing information and evidence to improve understanding of these benefits.

## The employment benefits of a circular economy

Studies by ACES partner Green Alliance have analysed the labour markets of Germany, Italy, Poland and the UK and concluded that better circular economy policy could cut structural unemployment and bring new, high quality jobs to regions and occupations facing high levels of unemployment. In the four countries studied, it found that over 320,000 people could be lifted out of unemployment.<sup>2</sup>

## How can we get the most from a circular economy?

Leading companies that want to increase the circularity of their operations need support from policy makers through the EU's Circular Economy Package. A strong policy mix could create demand for circular products and services made from secondary and bio-materials. It should include improved and expanded producer responsibility schemes, tax measures, green public procurement, effective ecodesign and targeted innovation programmes.

### References

- <sup>1</sup> Boosting circular design for a circular economy, 2015, De Groene Zaak and Ethica
- <sup>2</sup> E Coats and D Benton, 2016, Unemployment and the circular economy in Europe, Green Alliance



## ACES partners



### **De Groene Zaak**

innovative circular economy solutions from Dutch sustainable businesses

De Groene Zaak is the leading Sustainable Business Association in The Netherlands, uniting around 200 pioneering companies. It is a member of the new European Sustainable Business Federation Ecopreneur, and the Dutch Chapter of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. All its partners hold to a clear business principle: transforming the current economic order to a sustainable and circular one as fast as possible. It supports this goal by lobbying, putting issues on the agenda, connecting entrepreneurs and co-operating with the science network Het Groene Brein.



### **Ecologic Institute**

transdisciplinary research on resource efficiency and circular economy

Ecologic Institute conducts inter- and transdisciplinary environmental research. In its role as a private, independent organisation, it is dedicated to the preparation of relevant sociopolitical aspects of sustainability research findings and contributing new knowledge to environmental policy. Innovative research methods, an orientation on practice and a transdisciplinary approach ensure scientific excellence and societal relevance. It operates in Berlin, Brussels and Washington DC.



**Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)**  
in-depth policy research and analysis on the circular economy

IEEP is an independent not for profit research organisation dedicated to advancing an environmentally sustainable Europe through the analysis and development of policy and dissemination of research results. It specialises in policies at the European level and their implementation at national level. Recent interests include the bioeconomy, marine litter, the cascading use of wood and selection of the best package of policy instruments to enable a transition to a circular economy. It is based in Brussels and London.



**UnternehmensGrün (UG)**  
bringing the views of German sustainable SMEs into the circular economy debate

UG, the German federal association of green economy, was founded in 1992 as a non-partisan, non-profit and financially independent entrepreneurs association. Representing more than 180 members, it campaigns for the protection of the environment and a sustainable economy. Its business members are mainly SMEs, who come from all different economic sectors, from engineering, metalwork or the renewable energy sector to business consultancies, breweries, organic producers or ethical banking.



**Aldersgate Group**  
the voice of UK progressive  
businesses in the circular  
economy debate

The Aldersgate Group is an alliance of major businesses, professional institutes, NGOs and cross party politicians that develops policy solutions to address environmental challenges in a way that is both effective and delivers economic benefits for the UK and the EU. Its business members, which come from a wide range of economic sectors, have a global collective turnover in excess of £400 billion.



**Green Alliance**  
economic and policy insights  
on circular economy solutions

Green Alliance is an independent think tank focused on ambitious leadership for the environment. Since 1979, it has worked with influential leaders in business, NGOs and politics to stimulate new thinking on environmental policy, and increase political action and support for environmental solutions. Green Alliance runs the Circular Economy Task Force, a business group which has helped to develop the UK's circular economy policy agenda.



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