

RE-INCITE

Deliverable 1.2.1 Report about relationship building across policy and governance-levels



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The RE-INCITE project

The RE-INCITE project addresses one of the Alpine Space's most pressing challenges: the practical implementation of circular economy (CE) strategies. While many Alpine regions have developed CE strategies, they often remain at the policy level, with limited success in creating concrete value chains. Industrial companies tend to perceive their waste streams as sufficiently managed and secondary materials (SMs) as more costly than virgin raw materials, which discourages uptake. At the same time, municipalities lack the expert knowledge and tools to drive circular solutions and connect effectively with businesses.

Objectives and Approach

RE-INCITE aims to strengthen institutional capacities of municipalities and clusters to implement circular economy strategies by:

- **Developing resilient circular supply chains** in four pilot municipalities through place-based strategies tailored to local needs.
- **Transforming residuals into secondary materials** by matching supply and demand across industries.
- **Strengthening multi-level governance structures** by aligning local, regional, and macro-regional strategies (with direct links to EUSALP and the EU Green Deal).
- **Facilitating cross-sectoral collaboration** between clusters, municipalities, and businesses to enable new business models.
- **Providing policy recommendations and a “White Book”** for municipalities across the Alpine Space to ensure long-lasting transferability.

The project introduces an innovative place-based methodology, the **Value Chain Generator (VCG)**, to identify residual streams and new circular materials. By leveraging cluster expertise and municipal governance, RE-INCITE builds a nucleus for cross-border cooperation. Four pilot actions will generate concrete strategies, roadmaps, and business plans that municipalities can adopt and replicate.

Expected Results

- 4 pilot strategies implemented with measurable environmental, social, and economic impacts.
- Networking and knowledge transfer involving **10 municipalities and clusters** across the Alpine Space.
- At least **6 organisations with improved institutional capacities** through cooperation activities.
- Concrete policy recommendations submitted to **EUSALP authorities** to align governance for circular economy.
- A transferable **White Book for municipalities** to guide future CE initiatives.

Transnational Value

The Alpine Space's fragmented economies and administrations cannot tackle circular economy implementation in isolation. RE-INCITE ensures knowledge exchange and joint solutions across borders, with Stuttgart, Heilbronn, Basel, Ljubljana, and others serving as role models. By combining expertise from six partners—**Wirtschaftsförderung Raum Heilbronn (Lead Partner)**, **Anteja (SI)**, **COMET (IT)**, **Biz-Up (AT)**, **WRS Stuttgart (DE)**, and **RegioBasiliensis (CH)**—the project creates synergies that single regions could not achieve alone.

Impact and Long-term Vision RE-INCITE contributes directly to the **European Green Deal**, the **Territorial Agenda 2030**, and the **EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)** by reducing resource dependency, lowering CO₂ emissions, and fostering sustainable regional development. The long-term ambition is to scale successful models across the Alpine Space and beyond, ensuring that municipalities can continue building resilient, circular value chains after the project ends.

Introduction

Purpose of the Report

This report examines the relationship-building processes developed within the RE-INCITE project across local, regional, national, and transnational governance levels. Its purpose is to assess how cooperation among public authorities, clusters, industry representatives, research organisations, and other stakeholders has contributed to the implementation of circular economy (CE) strategies in the Alpine region.

The report documents the mechanisms and activities used to strengthen collaboration, facilitate knowledge exchange, and establish long-term partnerships that support the transition towards a circular economy. Particular attention is given to the development of cross-sectoral governance structures, as these are central to RE-INCITE's objective of creating a governance nucleus that connects municipalities, clusters, and other key actors. The report further identifies challenges, lessons learned, and recommendations for strengthening policy coordination and sustaining cooperation beyond the project's duration.

A central focus of this report is the assessment of four networking events organised within the framework of the work package. These events served as key platforms for stakeholder engagement, knowledge exchange, and dialogue across governance levels and sectors. They provided opportunities to strengthen existing relationships, establish new partnerships, and promote collaboration between public authorities, clusters, businesses, research organisations, and other actors involved in the proliferation of sustainable practices, as well as the circular economy transition. The specific objectives, formats, and outcomes of these events are described in subsequent sections of the report.

Relevance of Relationship Building for Project Objectives

Relationship building is a core prerequisite for achieving the objectives of RE-INCITE. While many Alpine regions have already developed circular economy strategies, their successful implementation requires effective cooperation between multiple governance levels and sectors. The transition towards a circular economy depends on the ability of public authorities, businesses, clusters, research institutions, and intermediary organisations to work together in identifying opportunities for industrial symbiosis, valorising industrial waste streams, and developing regional circular value chains.

The project recognises that no single stakeholder group can drive this transformation alone. Establishing trust-based relationships and structured cooperation mechanisms enables stakeholders to exchange expertise, align priorities, and jointly develop solutions that support the use of secondary raw materials, reduce carbon emissions, and decrease dependency on primary resource imports.

Furthermore, relationship building strengthens the governance capacities of regional public authorities by providing access to expert knowledge, practical experience, and transnational learning opportunities. Through cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation, RE-INCITE contributes to the creation of a governance framework capable of supporting the implementation of regional and macro-regional circular economy strategies.

Within RE-INCITE, the organisation of four networking events represented an important practical instrument for fostering these relationships, enabling direct interaction among stakeholders and supporting the emergence of cross-sectoral and cross-border cooperation structures that are essential for the implementation of circular economy strategies. These interactions helped to bridge institutional and sectoral boundaries, encouraged mutual learning, and contributed to the development of networks that can continue to support circular economy initiatives beyond the project's lifetime.

Strong stakeholder networks therefore not only facilitate project implementation but also increase the long-term sustainability, transferability, and policy impact of the project's results across the Alpine region.

Approach to stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder management within RE-INCITE was designed to support the implementation of circular economy strategies through the establishment of strong relationships across governance levels, sectors, and geographic boundaries. The primary objectives of the networking and relationship-building activities were to facilitate knowledge exchange, strengthen cooperation between relevant actors, promote the uptake of circular economy practices, and contribute to the development of governance structures capable of supporting long-term circular economy transitions in the Alpine region.

The stakeholder engagement approach targeted a diverse range of actors whose involvement is essential for the successful implementation of circular economy initiatives. These included policymakers and public authorities at local and regional levels, governance bodies and development agencies, project partners, business support organisations and clusters, research and innovation institutions, as well as private-sector companies and municipalities directly involved in circular economy activities. By engaging stakeholders with different perspectives, competencies, and responsibilities, the project sought to create a shared understanding of challenges and opportunities related to circular economy implementation.

To foster alignment and collaboration among these stakeholder groups, RE-INCITE employed several complementary engagement methods. A key element was the organisation of four networking events, which provided structured opportunities for dialogue, exchange of experiences, and the identification of potential areas for cooperation. These events enabled stakeholders from different sectors and governance levels to connect, discuss common challenges, and explore opportunities for collaborative action within the circular economy framework.

In addition to these transnational and regional networking activities, stakeholder engagement was embedded in the development of pilot projects. Close cooperation with local partners ensured that project activities remained aligned with regional needs and practical implementation challenges. Regular meetings with representatives of municipalities facilitated the exchange of information on local priorities, governance requirements, and potential policy implications. Similarly, regular meetings with representatives of companies provided insights into industry needs, resource flows, and opportunities for industrial symbiosis and circular value creation. These continuous interactions supported the co-development of pilot activities and strengthened the connection between strategic policy objectives and practical implementation measures.

Communication and outreach activities further supported stakeholder engagement and relationship building throughout the project. A dedicated project LinkedIn presence was used to share project developments, promote events, and disseminate results to a wider audience. In addition, project partners actively communicated project activities through their own organisational LinkedIn channels, helping to extend the project's reach across different networks and stakeholder communities. Regular newsletters provided another important communication channel, ensuring that stakeholders remained informed about project progress, upcoming activities, and emerging outcomes.

Beyond project-organised activities, RE-INCITE partners actively participated in external events and initiatives related to the circular economy. Project managers represented RE-INCITE at conferences, workshops, networking events, and stakeholder forums, where they engaged in discussions with policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and industry representatives. These interactions provided opportunities to promote project objectives and results, exchange knowledge with external stakeholders, identify potential synergies with related initiatives, and strengthen the project's integration within broader circular economy networks at regional, national, and European levels.

Through this combination of networking events, collaborative pilot development, continuous stakeholder dialogue, targeted communication activities, and participation in external circular economy networks, RE-INCITE established a participatory and multi-level approach to stakeholder management that supported both project implementation and the creation of lasting partnerships for circular economy governance.

Networking events conducted

Salzburg- Cooperation, Legacy and Change: 25 Years of Interreg Alpine Space, 12.05.2025

RE-INCITE was represented at the event *“Cooperation, Legacy and Change: 25 Years of Interreg Alpine Space”* held in Salzburg on 12 May 2025. Through participation in the event, including the operation of a project stand (Figure 1) and attendance at thematic sessions, workshops, and networking activities, the project was able to strengthen its visibility within the wider Interreg Alpine Space community and engage with a diverse range of stakeholders from across the Alpine region.

Key Outcomes

A key outcome of the event was the expansion of the project's professional network. Direct exchanges with representatives of public authorities, project consortia, research organisations, development agencies, and other European initiatives created opportunities to present RE-INCITE's objectives and activities, discuss common challenges related to circular economy implementation, and identify potential areas for future cooperation. The event also enabled the project team to increase awareness of RE-INCITE's approach to supporting circular economy governance and industrial symbiosis within the Alpine region.

Participation in workshops and presentations provided valuable insights into current developments within the Interreg Alpine Space programme, emerging policy priorities, and approaches adopted by other projects addressing sustainability, resource efficiency, and circular economy challenges. These exchanges contributed to a broader understanding of the project landscape and facilitated knowledge transfer regarding successful governance models, stakeholder engagement approaches, and implementation mechanisms that may inform future project activities and policy recommendations.

Contribution to Policy and Governance Alignment

From a policy and governance perspective, the event supported alignment between RE-INCITE activities and wider regional and European objectives related to the circular economy, resource efficiency, and sustainable regional development. Engagement with stakeholders operating at different governance levels enabled the project team to better understand evolving policy priorities and implementation challenges across the Alpine region. Furthermore, the event strengthened connections between RE-INCITE and other initiatives addressing related themes, contributing to greater coherence and coordination within the broader policy ecosystem.

Overall, participation in the event reinforced RE-INCITE's role within the Alpine Space community, supported the dissemination of project results, facilitated transnational knowledge exchange, and contributed to the development of relationships that can support the implementation and long-term impact of circular economy strategies across the region.

Stuttgart- RE-INCITE Clusters & Municipalities: Building Circular Regions Together, 10.07.2025

The RE-INCITE networking event held in Stuttgart on 10 July 2025 brought together project partners, regional development agencies, municipalities, clusters, circular economy experts, businesses, and other stakeholders to exchange experiences and collaboratively develop approaches for implementing circular economy strategies in participating regions. In addition, the RE-THINKING pop-up space (Figure 2) was open to the general public, providing citizens with the opportunity to learn about circular economy concepts, explore regional best-practice examples, and engage with ongoing sustainability initiatives. By combining stakeholder dialogue, public outreach, knowledge transfer, practical examples, and collaborative workshops (Figure 3), the event supported the project's objective of strengthening cross-sectoral and cross-border governance for circular economy implementation.

Key Outcomes

One of the key outcomes of the event was the increased visibility of circular economy initiatives among both professional stakeholders and the wider public. The pop-up exhibition showcased successful circular economy projects from the Stuttgart region and beyond, demonstrating practical applications of circular economy principles and highlighting the role that businesses, municipalities, and citizens can play in supporting sustainable resource management. This public-facing component complemented the policy and stakeholder discussions by promoting broader awareness and understanding of circular economy opportunities and challenges.

A further key outcome was the increased understanding of successful regional approaches to circular economy implementation. Through presentations from Stuttgart, Ljubljana, and Basel, participants gained insights into different governance models, support mechanisms, and ecosystem-building strategies that have facilitated circular economy initiatives at the regional level. The examples demonstrated the importance of coordinated action between public authorities, businesses, innovation organisations, and intermediary actors in creating favourable conditions for circular value chains and resource efficiency.

The event also generated valuable knowledge for the development of regional pilot projects. During the workshop sessions, participants reviewed the results of extensive cross-sectoral analyses covering more than 5,000 companies and identifying numerous opportunities for circular supply chains and market applications. Discussions focused on regional challenges, business opportunities, feedstock availability, value chain development, and market demand. This collaborative process contributed to the identification and prioritisation of pilot areas with strong replication potential and supported the formulation of concrete actions that can be implemented within participating regions.

A further outcome was the strengthening of stakeholder relationships across governance levels and sectors. The event provided a platform for direct dialogue between municipalities, regional authorities, clusters, businesses, research organisations, project partners, and members of the public. Through structured discussions and networking opportunities, participants were able to exchange experiences, identify common challenges, and explore opportunities for future cooperation. These interactions reinforced existing partnerships while creating new connections that can support the implementation of circular economy initiatives beyond the project's duration.

The exchange of best practices also highlighted the importance of industrial symbiosis, localised resource utilisation, and the valorisation of residual material streams. Presentations and discussions demonstrated how circular economy approaches can contribute to more resilient and competitive regional supply chains while reducing environmental impacts and dependence on external raw material sources. The examples presented provided practical inspiration for adapting successful approaches to different regional contexts across the Alpine Space area.

Contribution to Policy and Governance Alignment

The Stuttgart networking event made a significant contribution to policy and governance alignment by bringing together actors operating at different institutional levels and creating a shared platform for dialogue on circular economy implementation. The event facilitated exchanges between municipalities, regional development organisations, public authorities, clusters, industry representatives, and civil society stakeholders, helping to bridge the gap between strategic policy objectives and practical implementation measures.

The presentation of best practices from Stuttgart, Ljubljana, and Basel provided concrete examples of governance structures, policy instruments, and support mechanisms that enable circular economy transitions. By examining different regional approaches, participants were able to compare experiences, identify transferable elements, and discuss how successful measures could be adapted to their own governance contexts. This process supported the alignment of local and regional actions with broader circular economy objectives at Alpine, national, and European levels.

The workshop sessions further contributed to governance alignment by encouraging stakeholders to jointly define priorities, identify implementation pathways, and develop concrete actions for future pilot activities. The collaborative development of replicable pilot concepts fostered a common understanding of regional needs, available resources, and governance requirements. This participatory approach strengthened ownership among stakeholders and promoted the integration of policy, economic, and technical perspectives in the design of circular economy interventions.

The inclusion of the public-facing RE-THINKING pop-up space further strengthened governance alignment by creating opportunities for interaction between institutional stakeholders and citizens. This helped increase awareness of circular economy policies and initiatives, promote transparency, and encourage broader societal engagement in the transition towards more sustainable and circular economic models. Such engagement is essential for ensuring that circular economy strategies are not only developed at policy level but are also understood and supported by the communities they aim to benefit.

In addition, the event directly supported RE-INCITE's objective of establishing a cross-sectoral and cross-border governance nucleus connecting municipalities, clusters, and regional development actors. By facilitating knowledge exchange and collaborative planning among stakeholders from different regions and sectors, the event strengthened the foundations for long-term cooperation and contributed to the development of governance structures capable of supporting the implementation of regional and macro-regional circular economy strategies across the Alpine region.

Online Event- Circular Economy in an Urban Context: Shaping the Future Together, 25.11.2025

Key Outcomes

The online networking event “Circular Economy in an Urban Context: Shaping the Future Together”, held on 25 November 2025, served as an important platform for stakeholder engagement, knowledge exchange, and dissemination of RE-INCITE project activities. The event brought together representatives from municipalities, regional authorities, companies, business support organisations, and circular economy practitioners to discuss the role of cities, municipalities, and businesses in advancing the circular economy transition. By creating an accessible online format (Figure 4), the event enabled participation from a broad range of stakeholders and facilitated cross-regional exchange on challenges, opportunities, and practical solutions for circular economy implementation.

A key outcome of the event was the successful dissemination of RE-INCITE objectives, activities, and preliminary results to stakeholders directly involved in circular economy processes, waste management, and value chain development. The presentation of the project provided participants with an overview of RE-INCITE's approach to supporting regional authorities in implementing circular economy strategies and fostering collaboration between municipalities, clusters, and businesses. This contributed to raising awareness of the project's activities and strengthening stakeholder understanding of its objectives and expected impacts.

The event also facilitated the transfer of knowledge and best practices through contributions from external experts. The presentation by BaselCircular offered valuable insights into the development of regional circular economy ecosystems and demonstrated practical approaches to supporting innovation, collaboration, and circular business models. The contribution from the Lower Austrian Chamber of Commerce (WKO Niederösterreich) provided additional perspectives on the role of businesses, regional economic development actors, and support structures in accelerating the transition towards a circular economy. Together, these examples highlighted practical implementation pathways and governance approaches that can be adapted and replicated in different regional contexts.

Another important outcome was the active exchange between municipalities and companies regarding opportunities and challenges associated with circular economy implementation in urban environments. Through moderated discussions and interactive participation tools, stakeholders were encouraged to share experiences, identify common barriers, and discuss potential solutions. These exchanges contributed to a better understanding of stakeholder needs and priorities while fostering connections between actors operating at different levels of governance and within different sectors of the economy.

The documentation of discussion results and key insights generated during the event provided an additional outcome with long-term value for the project. The collected feedback and examples of good practice will support the planning and implementation of activities in subsequent project phases and contribute to the refinement of pilot actions and governance approaches within RE-INCITE.

Contribution to Policy and Governance Alignment

The event made a significant contribution to policy and governance alignment by creating a platform where municipalities, companies, business support organisations, and circular economy experts could exchange perspectives on the practical implementation of circular economy strategies. By bringing together actors from different sectors and governance levels, the event supported the development of a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with circular economy transitions in urban contexts.

The participation of best-practice organisations such as BaselCircular and the Lower Austrian Chamber of Commerce provided participants with concrete examples of governance structures, support mechanisms, and collaborative approaches that have proven effective in promoting circular economy initiatives. These examples demonstrated how

cooperation between public authorities, businesses, intermediary organisations, and innovation actors can strengthen regional circular economy ecosystems and accelerate the implementation of strategic objectives.

The discussions also contributed to aligning local implementation efforts with broader regional, national, and European policy goals related to resource efficiency, waste reduction, climate action, and sustainable economic development. By examining practical experiences and lessons learned from different regions, participants were able to identify transferable approaches and reflect on how governance mechanisms can be adapted to support circular economy implementation within their own contexts.

Furthermore, the event reinforced RE-INCITE's objective of strengthening cooperation between municipalities, clusters, and businesses through knowledge exchange and stakeholder dialogue. The interactive format encouraged active participation and helped build relationships among stakeholders who may not otherwise have opportunities to engage directly. This contributed to the development of networks and collaborative structures that support the implementation of circular economy strategies and enhance governance capacity across the Alpine region.

Overall, the event strengthened policy and governance alignment by facilitating knowledge transfer, promoting stakeholder engagement, and fostering a common understanding of the actions required to advance circular economy objectives in urban and regional contexts. The insights generated through the discussions will continue to inform project activities and support the development of effective governance approaches throughout the remaining project period.

Ljubljana – Urban Future: The Better-Cities Event, 26.03.2026

Key Outcomes

RE-INCITE participated as an Expo Partner at the Urban Future 2026 conference in Ljubljana, one of Europe's leading events dedicated to sustainable urban development, innovation, and city transformation. The event brought together approximately 2,000 participants from 290 cities and 48 countries, including city leaders, policymakers, urban planners, researchers, businesses, and sustainability practitioners. The conference programme featured more than 60 sessions, 180 speakers, and multiple thematic tracks addressing circularity, innovation in governance, resilient societies, and urban transformation.

Through its presence in the Expo area (Figure 5), RE-INCITE was able to showcase the project's objectives, activities, and emerging results to a highly relevant international audience. The project stand served as a focal point for discussions with municipalities, regional authorities, research organisations, businesses, and representatives of other European initiatives working on circular economy, resource efficiency, climate action, and sustainable urban development. These exchanges significantly increased the visibility of the project and strengthened awareness of RE-INCITE's approach to supporting regional circular economy implementation through cooperation between municipalities, clusters, and businesses.

A key outcome of participation was the expansion of the project's professional network beyond the immediate Alpine Space community. Direct interactions with urban practitioners and decision-makers from across Europe created opportunities to exchange experiences, identify common challenges, and explore potential synergies with initiatives addressing similar sustainability and circular economy objectives. The event enabled the project team to establish new contacts and strengthen relationships with organisations working at the intersection of circular economy, climate neutrality, urban innovation, and regional development.

Participation in conference sessions (Figure 6), workshops, and informal networking activities also provided valuable insights into current developments in sustainable urban governance and circular economy implementation. The

thematic focus on circularity, governance innovation, and resilient societies offered opportunities to learn from leading European cities and organisations that are developing practical solutions for resource efficiency, waste reduction, climate adaptation, and sustainable economic development. These exchanges contributed to a broader understanding of emerging policy trends, governance approaches, and implementation mechanisms relevant to RE-INCITE's objectives.

The event further provided an opportunity to position RE-INCITE within the wider European discourse on urban sustainability and circular economy transitions. By engaging with stakeholders from different sectors and governance levels, the project was able to demonstrate the relevance of its cross-sectoral and cross-border approach to circular value chain development and industrial symbiosis. The discussions confirmed the growing importance of collaborative governance models that connect municipalities, businesses, clusters, and innovation actors in addressing complex sustainability challenges.

Contribution to Policy and Governance Alignment

Participation in Urban Future 2026 contributed significantly to policy and governance alignment by connecting RE-INCITE with a broad European community of policymakers, city representatives, governance experts, and sustainability practitioners. The event provided a valuable platform for understanding how different cities and regions are addressing circular economy challenges through policy innovation, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative governance approaches. These insights support the alignment of RE-INCITE activities with evolving European priorities related to circular economy, climate neutrality, sustainable resource management, and urban resilience.

The conference's strong focus on circularity and innovation in governance was particularly relevant to RE-INCITE's objective of supporting public authorities in implementing regional and macro-regional circular economy strategies. Through participation in thematic sessions and discussions, project representatives gained a deeper understanding of governance mechanisms, policy instruments, and stakeholder engagement models that are being applied across Europe to accelerate circular economy transitions. These lessons can inform both pilot implementation activities and the development of recommendations for regional authorities participating in the project.

The Expo Partner role also enabled RE-INCITE to engage directly with municipalities and regional actors seeking practical solutions for implementing sustainability and circular economy objectives. Discussions at the project stand facilitated the exchange of experiences regarding policy implementation challenges, financing mechanisms, stakeholder mobilisation, and cross-sectoral cooperation. This contributed to a stronger alignment between project activities and the practical needs of public authorities responsible for delivering circular economy policies on the ground.

Furthermore, participation in Urban Future strengthened RE-INCITE's contribution to the development of a cross-sectoral and cross-border governance nucleus, as envisioned by the project. By connecting with stakeholders from diverse geographic, institutional, and sectoral backgrounds, the project reinforced its role as a facilitator of knowledge exchange and cooperation within the wider European circular economy ecosystem. These interactions supported the creation of networks that extend beyond the project's partnership structure and can contribute to the long-term uptake, transferability, and policy impact of RE-INCITE results across the Alpine region and beyond.

Emerging Collaborations and Synergies

A key achievement of the project has been the establishment and strengthening of collaborations at multiple governance levels across the Alpine Space. Through a series of interregional workshops and exchange formats, project partners have shared experiences, challenges, and good practices related to circular economy initiatives, governance approaches, regional priorities, and strategic frameworks. This continuous knowledge exchange has fostered mutual learning and enabled partners to identify common opportunities while addressing region-specific needs.

At the regional level, cooperation has intensified within the pilot areas through the active involvement of municipalities, companies, public institutions, and other relevant stakeholders. These interactions have created a collaborative environment for jointly identifying circular economy potentials and barriers, discussing feasible solutions, and defining practical pathways towards greater circularity. The co-creation process has supported the development of strategies and regional roadmaps that reflect local circumstances while contributing to broader Alpine Space objectives.

An important role has also been played by the project's Advisory Board and external circular economy experts. Their expertise has provided valuable guidance for the pilot regions, stimulated innovative ideas, and facilitated connections between regional actors and wider European networks. Through these exchanges, stakeholders gained access to new knowledge, practical experiences, and policy perspectives that support the implementation of circular economy measures.

The project demonstrates strong stakeholder commitment and engagement. Regional stakeholders have actively participated in workshops, consultations, and co-creation activities, contributing to the development of region-specific roadmaps that include concrete actions, responsibilities, and implementation timelines. In addition, both regional and transnational workshops have strengthened networking among municipalities, clusters, businesses, and public authorities across the Alpine Space.

These emerging collaborations directly contribute to the project's objectives by strengthening institutional capacities, enhancing cooperation among municipalities and regional actors, and creating the foundation for long-term circular economy governance. The established networks and knowledge-sharing mechanisms are expected to continue beyond the project duration, supporting the implementation of pilot strategies, the development of policy recommendations for EUSALP authorities, and the transferability of project results through the White Book for municipalities.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Overview

The relationship-building activities conducted within RE-INCITE over the first project period provide a rich basis for reflection. Across four networking events, continuous stakeholder dialogue, pilot co-development processes, and participation in external forums, a set of consistent patterns has emerged — both in terms of what has worked well and where challenges persist. The following lessons and recommendations are drawn from these experiences and are intended to inform both the remaining project period and future circular economy governance initiatives in the Alpine Space.

Lesson 1: Format diversity drives broader and deeper engagement

The four networking events demonstrated that no single format is sufficient to engage the full range of relevant stakeholders. The in-person event in Stuttgart, which combined a professional stakeholder workshop with a public-facing pop-up exhibition, reached both institutional actors and citizens — two audiences that rarely share the same platform. The online event in November 2025 removed geographic and logistical barriers, enabling participation from municipalities and organisations that would not have attended an in-person format. Participation at large-scale conferences such as Urban Future 2026 in Ljubljana, meanwhile, created exposure to European-level policy communities far beyond the immediate project partnership.

Recommendation: Future stakeholder engagement strategies within RE-INCITE and comparable projects should deliberately combine in-person, hybrid, and online formats, as well as project-organised events and strategic participation in external forums. Each format reaches different audiences and serves different relational functions; treating them as complementary rather than interchangeable maximises both breadth of reach and depth of engagement.

Lesson 2: Cross-sectoral and cross-border dialogue requires structured facilitation

One of the most consistent findings across the networking events was that meaningful exchange between stakeholders from different sectors and governance levels does not happen spontaneously — it requires deliberate facilitation. The workshop sessions in Stuttgart, for instance, demonstrated that collaborative priority-setting between municipalities, clusters, businesses, and research organisations is only productive when participants have a shared analytical basis, clear framing questions, and time for structured discussion. Without this scaffolding, exchanges tend to remain at a general level and fail to generate actionable outputs.

Recommendation: All future networking and co-creation activities should be designed with facilitation as a core component, not an afterthought. This includes providing participants with relevant background materials in advance, structuring sessions around specific decisions or outputs, and documenting results systematically. Investing in facilitation quality is particularly important in transnational settings where participants bring significantly different institutional cultures, governance contexts, and levels of prior knowledge.

Lesson 3: Policy and implementation levels must be connected deliberately

A recurring theme across the governance alignment sections of this report is the gap between policy objectives at regional, national, and European levels, and the practical implementation realities faced by municipalities, businesses, and clusters. The networking activities — particularly the online event and the Stuttgart workshop — helped bridge this gap by creating direct dialogue between policymakers and practitioners. However, the gap remains significant. Municipalities frequently lack the expert knowledge, governance capacity, and inter-institutional connections to translate CE strategies into concrete actions, even when political will exists.

Recommendation: RE-INCITE should continue to invest in formats that bring policymakers and implementers into the same room (or virtual space), with a particular emphasis on making policy instruments legible and actionable for municipal actors. The development of the White Book should explicitly address this translation challenge, offering practical governance tools and implementation frameworks — not only strategic recommendations — that municipalities can use without requiring additional expert intermediaries.

Lesson 4: Sustained engagement requires continuity beyond individual events

While the networking events generated significant momentum, there is a structural risk that the relationships and insights generated at individual events dissipate without systematic follow-up. The documentation of discussion results from the online event, for instance, was identified as an outcome with long-term value — but the realisation

of that value depends on whether and how those results are fed back into project activities. Similarly, the new contacts established at Urban Future 2026 will only develop into meaningful partnerships if they are actively cultivated.

Recommendation: Each networking event should be followed by a structured follow-up process, including the documentation and circulation of key insights to participants, identification of specific stakeholders for further engagement, and integration of event learnings into pilot planning and governance development activities. A shared stakeholder relationship management approach across the project partnership would help ensure that connections made by individual partners are accessible to and usable by the wider consortium.

Lesson 5: Implementing a pilot activity requires a clear concept and a solid network

A key success factor is the presence of pioneering technologies and innovative organizations within the pilot regions, which have established themselves as important hubs for waste management and circular economy activities. Stakeholders show a strong commitment to identifying and developing potential circular value chains, even for niche products or smaller material streams. A broad range of regional and international events provides platforms for showcasing these best practices, exchanging knowledge, and connecting relevant stakeholders. However, despite the availability of suitable technologies, logistical barriers often complicate implementation. Another challenge is engaging decision-makers and public administrations, whose support is often essential for scaling circular solutions. In addition, the complexity of supply chains and material flows can hinder the continuity of circular business models.

Recommendation: Involving decision-makers and public administrations more actively in such events can improve awareness, support, and policy alignment. Furthermore, developing regional supply chain networks and promoting local material exchanges can help reduce logistical barriers and transportation costs. Continuous and understandable knowledge-sharing and the dissemination of successful case studies can also support the replication and scaling of circular economy initiatives.

Annexes



Figure 1 - RE-INCITE Stand at the Salzburg Networking Event



Figure 2- Group Photo in Pop-up Space in Stuttgart



Figure 3 - Workshop Discussions during Stuttgart Networking Event

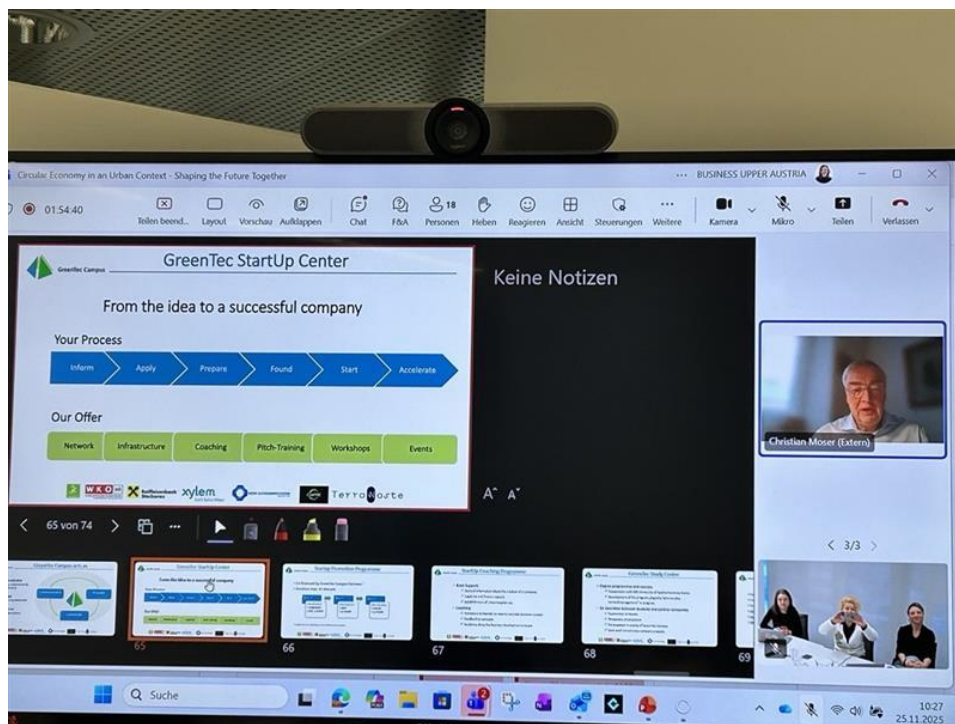


Figure 4 - Behind-the-Scenes of the Online Networking Event in November 2025

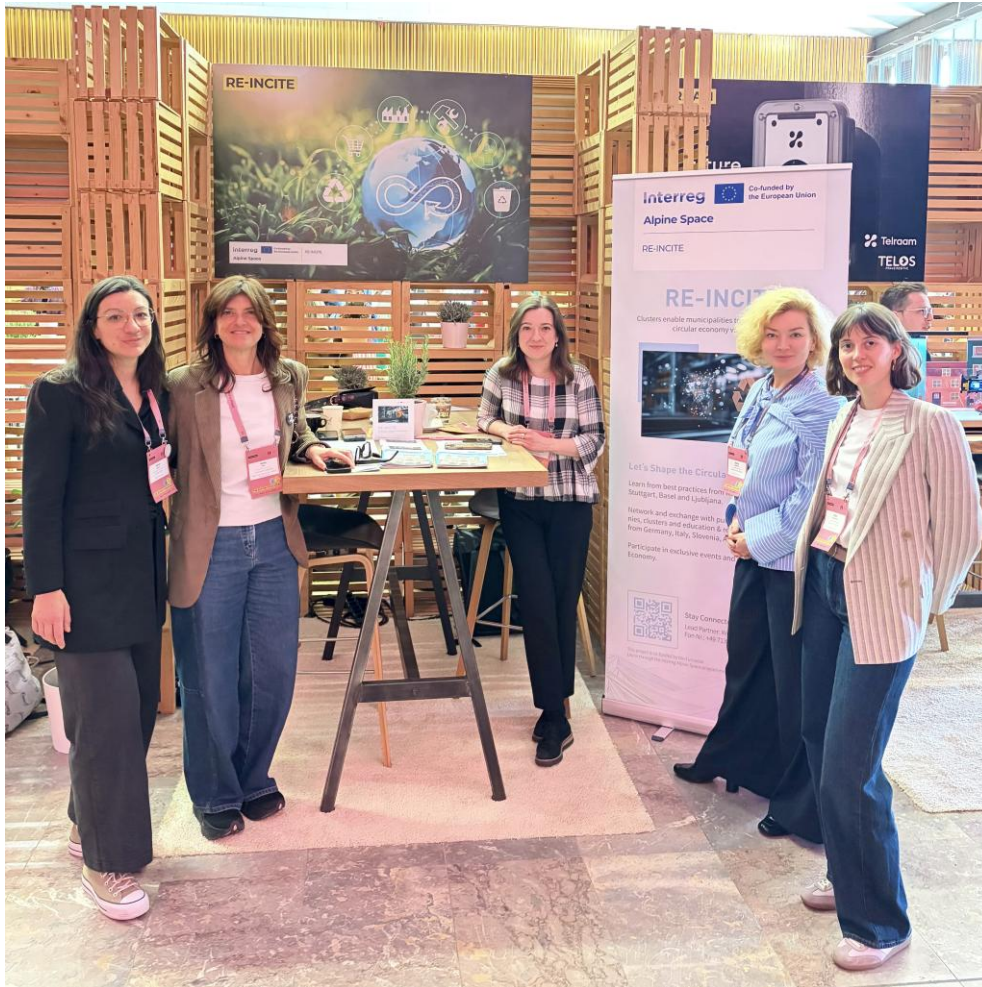


Figure 5 - RE-INCITE Stand at Urban Future 2026 in Ljubljana

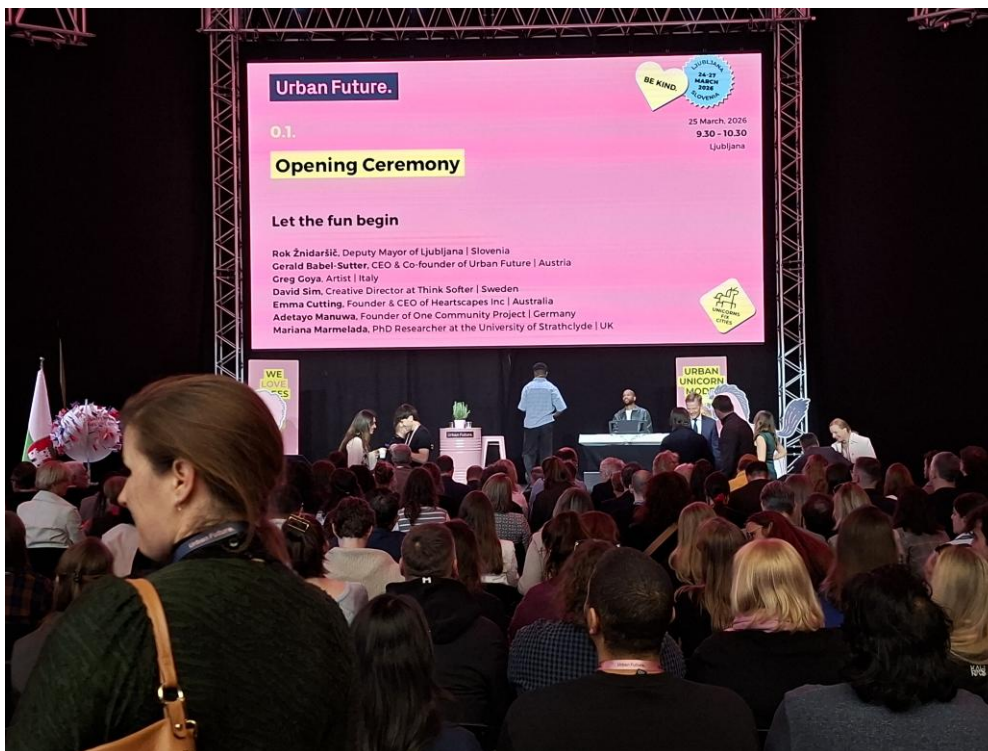


Figure 6 - View from the RE-INCITE Stand at Urban Future 2026