



Strategic Framework 2022–2024 Zero Waste Europe

May 2022

zerowasteurope.eu





Our Vision

is a Zero Waste Europe.

A zero waste, just, and inclusive Europe built on respect for ecological limits and community rights.

A Europe where our production and consumption models are compatible with the resilience and wellbeing of communities, and support people's right to a safe and healthy environment - all resulting in a more equitable income distribution.

A Europe where regenerative, people-focused, and community-led solutions restore and conserve our resources.

A Europe that leads by example and acts as a catalyst for a global transition towards zero waste.

Our Mission

Zero Waste Europe (ZWE) redesigns our relationship with resources by empowering communities and changemakers across Europe.

ZWE is the European network of communities, local leaders, experts, and change agents working towards the prevention and elimination of waste in our society.

We advocate for sustainable systems; for the redesign of our relationship with resources; and for a global shift towards environmental justice, accelerating a just transition towards zero waste for the benefit of people and the planet.



What moves and inspires us

ZWE's strength lies in our membership, who works together in solidarity, collaboration, and commitment.

We promote local solutions to global challenges. Through our network, we build local-global connections that are essential to movement-building and which enhance our collective impact.

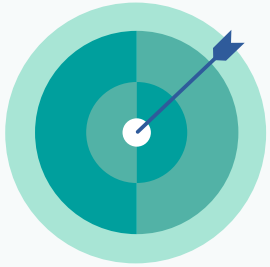
Our solutions are decentralised, replicable, and adaptable to diverse geographic and cultural needs and situations. We bring these solutions with us when we campaign at the global level.

We believe in the power of social movements to create positive change. Our transnational organising model respects place-based leadership, fosters solidarity, identifies points of common cause, and helps us build a culture of shared practice for positive change.

We believe in equity, democracy, and justice. The inclusive zero waste approaches that we promote are rooted in the belief that the democratisation of power and resources is essential for the preservation of our planet, and for the creation of just and sustainable local economies.



Our organisational values reflect our commitment and way of thinking and working:



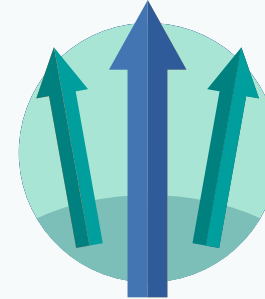
We are ***purpose-driven***, always putting forward a solution-oriented approach.



We ***care*** deeply about our communities, the environment, and systemic changes that benefit society as a whole - while also looking after ourselves and our own well-being as a team and as individuals.



We believe that acting with ***integrity*** is crucial to achieve impact and change, both inside and outside our network.



We adopt a ***game-changing*** approach to challenge the *status quo*, explore emerging topics and create a safe space to succeed (and to recover from setbacks).



We are ***adaptable***, constantly striving towards learning and improving; open to change and taking agency.

Theory of change

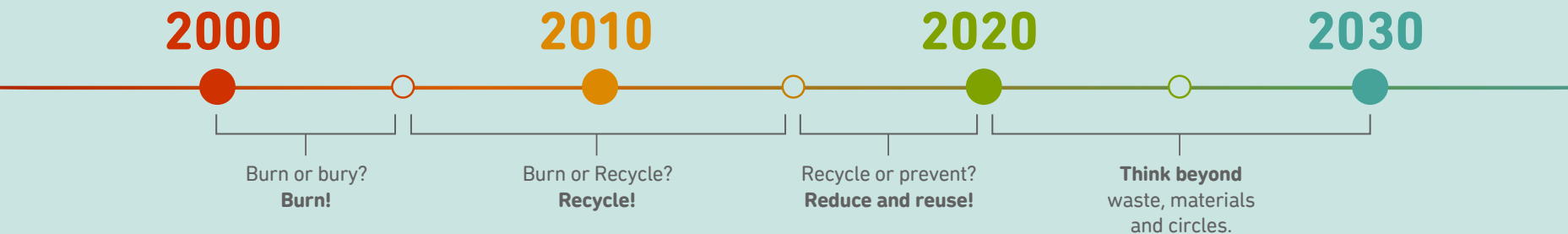
Getting Europe to zero waste requires transforming the relationship our society has with resources and with itself.

Our approach to transform society is by changing resource management, influencing consumer behaviour, supporting new business models, and creating the appropriate legal framework and economic incentives to enable this transition. We foster change by providing vision and knowledge; as well as by facilitating the creation of local, national and international networks and movements.

We are committed to embody the change we want to see in the European society (and in the world) at large.



Evolution over the last 20 years and future



Co-create a new system!

Europe is in the midst of a transition and zero waste is part of it.

The effects of the climate crisis are becoming more evident every year, with floods, fires, pandemics becoming the new normal. From the point of view of resources management, the need for a circular economy is finally becoming real for most Europeans due to the disruption in global supply chains and energy prices. European producers and consumers are having to wait and/or pay more to continue producing and consuming like they used to, and this is an unequivocal sign of change of tendency. The more expensive and less reliable a globalised economy is, the cheaper and more convenient a circular economy becomes. In short: durability, reusability, and repairability are less disadvantaged today than they have been in the recent past.

Ten years ago, the concept of zero waste was laughed at. Today, zero waste is mainstream, from being considered a practical approach to implement a circular economy to a trending lifestyle globally. The efforts from civil society groups in Europe and around the world pushed the debate higher in the waste hierarchy. If at any time over the last twenty years reuse and prevention had a chance, it is now. **And ZWE is committed to bringing that change forward.**

From a content perspective, for
the next 3 years
we will focus on...

Bringing in
INCENTIVES
and funding for
the transition

Phasing out
TOXICS

Lifting up
REFUSE

Pushing for better
RECYCLING

Bringing
WASTE DISPOSAL
down

3 pillars: Interdependent Focus Areas

We catalyse the transition to a zero waste Europe by interconnecting and integrating 3 core pillars:



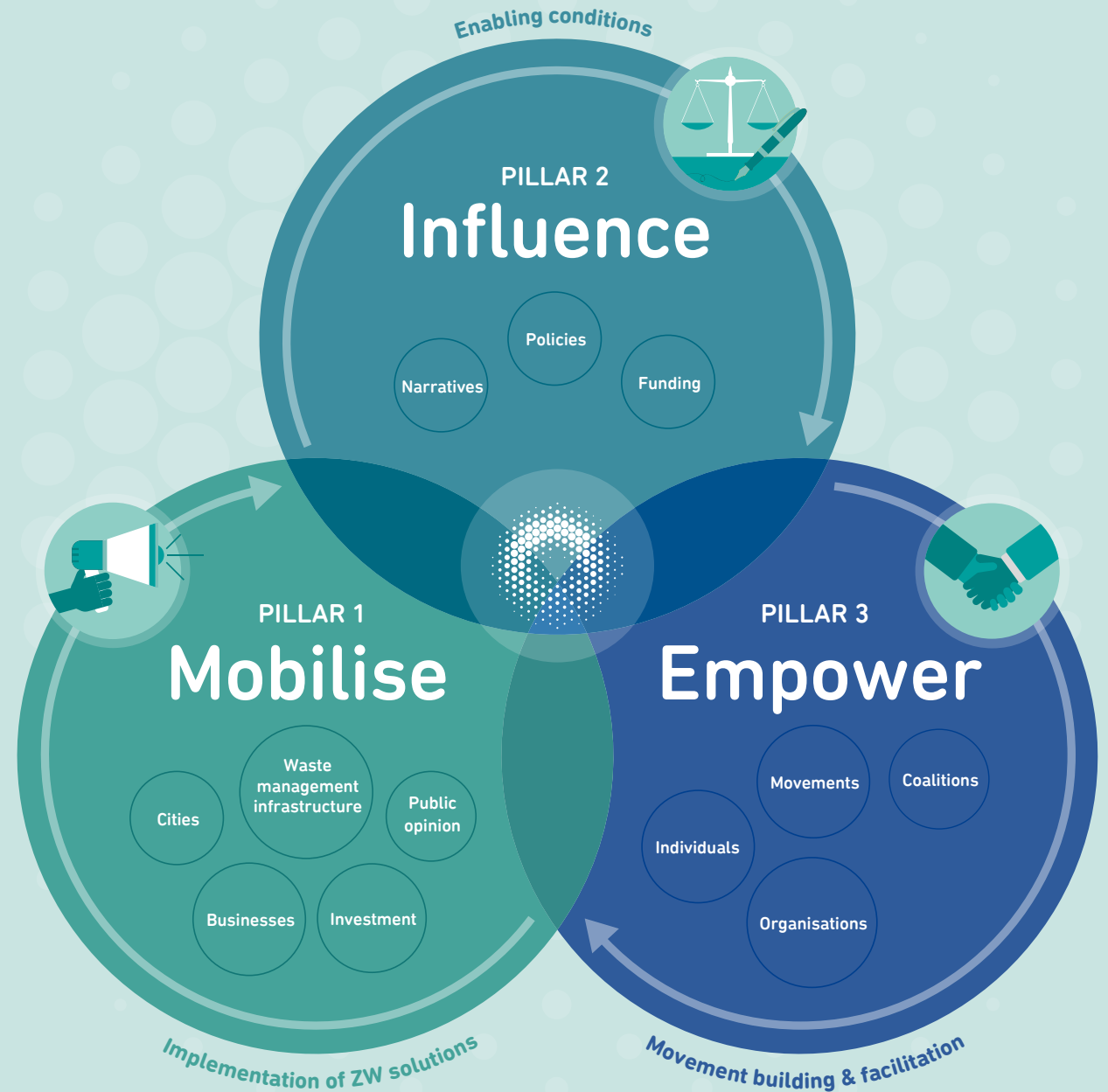
Implementing zero waste solutions on the ground by mobilising cities, businesses and investment.



Creating the enabling conditions by influencing policies, funding and narratives.



Movement-building and facilitation by organising and mobilising groups inside and outside our organisation and immediate network.



Pillar 1

Implementation



2024 targets and impact

- Total municipal waste generation decreases every year, and residual waste is reduced.
- Meaningful reduction in packaging waste in B2C as a result of an increase in reusable packaging.
- Zero waste solutions increasingly become mainstream and embedded into our daily lives.

ZWE was built on the initial zero waste vision and code created by the Italian city of Capannori back in 2007, while being established as the European branch of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA). Our very existence and strength as an organisation stems from the fact that we have expertise on the ground and in Brussels in the implementation of zero waste strategies at local and regional level. We provide expertise, technical guidance and facilitation to those willing to walk the zero waste path.



What are our desired outcomes?

City / Business level

- 20+ countries have flagship **Zero Waste Cities**.
- 300 cities use **data-models** to reduce waste and emissions.
- 100+ **Zero Waste Business Label** certified organisations.
- Zero waste is a **core business value**.
- 10+ **Material Recovery and Biological Treatment (MRBT)** plants operating.

Product level

- 3-5 disposable **segments** shift to **reusable**.
- 5+ new Member States roll-out **Deposit Return Systems (DRS)**.
- 2/3 of the **EU population** (5+ countries) have **DRS** for beverage packaging.

Other collaborations, instruments, and narrative changes

- 2 available **financial vehicles** to finance the zero waste transition.
- 10+ **zero waste strategies** implemented in the **Global South**.

Pillar 2

Enabling Conditions



2024 targets and impact

- New legal and financial regulations prioritise prevention and reuse over recycling, and disavow disposal practices.
- European and national regulations facilitate and enforce better recycling (volume, quality, and geographical proximity) as well as stimulate the uptake of recycled materials.
- Legal and financial drivers prioritise best practice solutions for the transition to zero waste.
- Food packaging policy includes bans on the most hazardous chemicals, allowing safe use, reuse, and recycling of packaging.

We have a strong record of being influential in EU policy making. We are a regular contributor and a credible actor, with good access to institutions and media. We are well-respected by pressure groups, policy makers, and stakeholders in the field of circular economy and the climate agenda. Besides the work done on EU policies, we are committed to create the right framing for zero waste solutions to develop, and this also involves influencing and creating new narratives around reuse and other circular practices.



What are our desired outcomes?

Guidelines and regulation

- Redirect **public funds** from disposal to zero waste solutions.
- Climate and environmental **incentives support waste prevention**, reuse, and recycling.
- Include binding:
 - General waste prevention target;
 - Reuse targets.
- Clear **definition and methodology** to assess real recyclability.
- Limit incineration, "chemical recycling", and **plastic-to-fuels**.
- Ensure **accessibility** to, and the **sustainability** of nappies.

Other collaborations, instruments, and narrative changes

- Reusable is seen as a **healthier, more affordable and more convenient option** than single-use.
- European zero waste policies are **known and considered** in other regions.
- Key **private investments** allow pioneer solutions to scale-up.

Pillar 3

Movement-Building & Facilitation



2024 targets and impact

- Changemakers inside and outside ZWE create greater impact through better training, resources, connections, and organised approaches.
- The culture of cooperation and inclusivity that is intrinsic in the way we work is adopted by the people and organisations with whom we work.
- National Zero Waste Alliances have an important stakeholders role at their level in co-creating strategic national legislations on circular economy and zero waste.

Movement building is a central pillar in all ZWE intervention points, and a long-term vision in itself.

We mobilise and coordinate a network of 35 European member organisations, and support the structuration and development of national zero waste alliances across the continent.

As part of our movement building efforts, ZWE initiates coalitions, alliances, and movements capable of fostering the needed collaboration and systemic thinking to tackle the challenges ahead; while ensuring that the zero waste narrative is owned and lived by the wider environmental landscape. As an example, in 2016 ZWE co-founded the Break Free From Plastic (BFFP) movement, and established its European coordination. Currently, we host the coordination of the Break Free From Plastic movement in Europe, including the Rethink Plastic alliance; and of the Food Contact Materials coalition. As a founding and active member of these groups, we advance our agenda of moving away from disposability and presence of hazardous substances in packaging. We facilitate negotiations with big companies and empower small companies to get organised.



What are our desired outcomes?

ZWE Member network

- Policy-making processes in 23+ countries are impacted by campaigns and services.
- 4 new groups join ZWE and are empowered.
- Existing groups are better coordinated.
- The zero waste agenda in (at least) 5 countries is influenced by zero waste alliances.
- ZWE and GAIA members increase the network capacity through increased engagement.
- ZWE increases its impact beyond the traditional “green” sphere. Impacted communities are integrated by design.

Mission Zero Academy/Cities work

- Zero Waste Cities influence political and business strategies.

Key partners and coalition work

- BFFP helps to implement ZWE’s vision.
- The New European Reuse Association (New ERA) actively pushes key policy changes in reuse solutions as inspired by ZWE.
- The new Food Contact Material legislation positively impacts ZW work when it comes to health.
- ZWE brings the zero waste message to the broader environmental and social justice movements and reinforces its intersectional approach.



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