



# Zero Waste Europe **Annual Report** **2021**

[zerowasteeurope.eu](https://zerowasteeurope.eu)

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# About

## Zero Waste Europe

Zero Waste Europe (ZWE) is the European network of communities, organisations, local leaders, experts, and change agents working towards the elimination of waste in our society. We advocate for sustainable systems and the redesign of our relationship with resources, to accelerate a just transition towards zero waste for the benefit of people and the planet.

ZWE was created in 2014 as the European regional branch of the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA), and throughout the last years has established itself as a key environment, circular economy, just transition, and movement-building network in Europe. Building on the initial zero waste vision and code-created by the Italian city of Capannori, the ZWE network now includes 33 members (as of May 2022) from 28 European countries and works with topics across the whole chain.

From product design to reusability and end-of-pipe waste management solutions; from the phase-out of plastics to waste trade and municipal zero waste strategies, our scope has significantly expanded but our mission and vision remain the same – a zero waste, fairer, inclusive, circular Europe for all (and planet, too, while we're at it).



# 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.



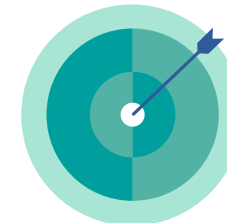
# Our Mission

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.

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



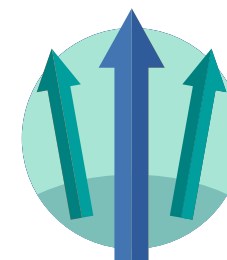
We are ***purpose-driven***, always putting forward a solution-oriented approach.



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



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).



# A Note

## from the Directors



**Katleen Verhelle**  
Operations Direction

**Esra Tat**  
Associate Director

**Joan Marc Simon**  
Executive Director

*Dear all,*

**2021 has been a pivotal year for ZWE, with major progress in the field of implementing zero waste solutions, including the successful kick-off of a major work on reuse, and marked by significant policy developments. This increased impact would have not been possible without the expertise and dedication of our growing network in Europe!**

Over the last year, we have reinforced our efforts to bring out solutions and accelerate the transition from a linear to a circular economy on the ground. Our flagship Zero Waste Cities work was taken to the next level following the official launch of our knowledge and capacity-building spinoff, the Mission Zero Academy (MiZA), which started operating ZWE's Certification schemes. We have welcomed the first official zero waste candidate cities, thanks to the close and coordinated efforts with our members across Europe. In addition to that, we successfully kick-started a complex yet promising multi-stakeholder process to support the systemic transition to reuse in key market segments. To sustain this momentum, we expanded into a new area of work: exploring and identifying new financing models and mechanisms to further support the local transition to zero waste.

Our policy work ensured an upward movement in the zero waste hierarchy, to support people's right to a safe and healthy environment. We have celebrated many victories, ranging from banning waste shipments outside the OECD - adding an extra barrier to Europe's waste colonialism -; access to safe, fair, and circular menstrual products; excluding the funding for incineration under the methane strategy; and to the inclusion of a residual waste target.

The unique combination of representing grassroots groups in Europe and being closely connected with our friends and colleagues globally as part of GAIA\* played a major role in this progress. In 2022 and 2023, we will keep the pressure on major files such as the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive and the Waste Framework Directive.

In 2021, we have welcomed new colleagues and members, making our organisation and network even stronger. Our support to the formation of national zero waste alliances and platforms keep growing and key progress is made - for example, with the official creation of Zero Waste Germany, bringing together 11 organisations.

Last but not least, in 2021 we designed and adopted a new Strategic Framework 2022-2024, which shortly became our collective compass to guide our actions as a network and organisation. This collaborative effort sets an ambitious plan for the region, but also aims at making sure Europe will lead by example and act as a catalyst for a global transition towards zero waste.

Together with our members, funders and partners in Europe and globally, in 2022 ZWE will continue to deliver its ambition vision of a zero waste, just, and inclusive Europe built on respect for ecological limits and community rights!

\* Zero Waste Europe is the regional chapter of GAIA:  
<https://www.no-burn.org/europe>



# A Strategic Framework

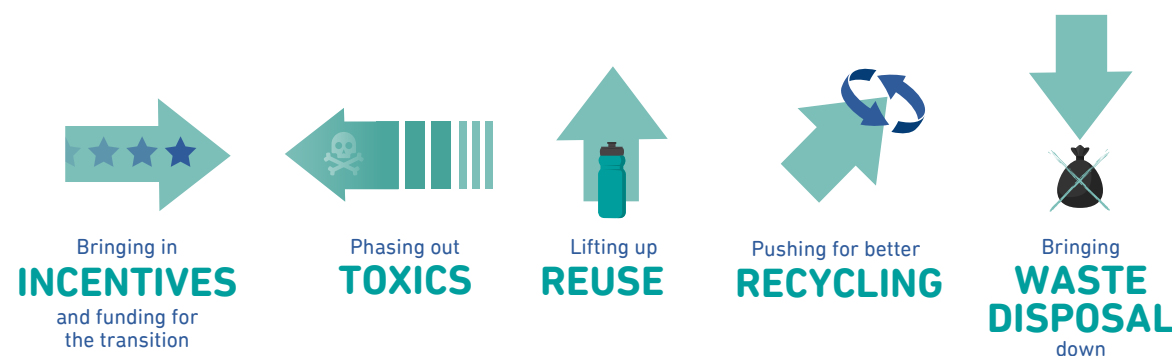
fit for a zero waste future

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 implementing 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 three years  
we will be focusing on



## Strategic Framework in a nutshell

The integration of our work areas in three main pillars is key to explain our impact.



### Enabling conditions through work on EU policies

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.



### Implementation of zero waste strategies

Our credibility 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.



### Movement building and coordination

Our expertise in coordination, movement building and process facilitation is well recognised. We coordinate a network of 33 European member organisations.

As part of our movement-building efforts, ZWE initiates coalitions and movements. 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 from the presence of hazardous substances in packaging.

We facilitate negotiations with big companies  
and empower small companies to get organised.

You can read our full [Strategic Framework for 2022-24](#) on the ZWE website.



# Key ZWE highlights

from 2021

## On the cities front

ZWE members in **19 European countries** are now working with their local municipalities to help them become



**with over 460** now part of our programme and certification

We now have over **460 European municipalities** who have committed to become a

**Zero Waste City** with us and the **Mission Zero Academy**

including capital cities such as **Brussels** and **Riga**



Looking at the latest data from our Zero Waste Cities we can say that on average

**Zero Waste Cities** produce **65 kg less per person** per year than the EU average

ZWE members in the following countries are now formally working on the **zero waste cities** model with their municipalities in:

**Italy • Slovenia • Romania**  
**Croatia • Spain • Germany**  
**Bulgaria • Ukraine • Cyprus**  
**Belgium • Latvia • UK**  
**Greece • Portugal • Slovakia**  
**Czech Republic • Montenegro**  
**Switzerland • Austria**



## Advocacy and policy milestones



The European Commission included a ban of **waste shipments outside the OECD** as part of the review of its **Waste Shipment regulation**



The European Parliament report on the **EU methane strategy** called for ending of **funding for incineration practices**



The European Parliament adopted a resolution supporting access to **safe, fair, and circular menstrual products**



Launch of a **new coalition on Food Contacts Materials**

Including a **new coordinator, staff, (upcoming) website, and tools** to increase the ambition and impact of the upcoming **Food Contact Materials legislation**



The European Parliament report on the **Circular Economy Action Plan** called for minimising waste incineration, setting a residual waste target and improving the landfill target from the **current 10% one to a kg-based goal**

## Shaping the Narrative

Content creation with research, policy briefing and reports



### Increased Press Work



### Webinar Series



**Zero Waste Live! Webinars**

(about 120-300 registrations and 50-120 attendants per webinar)

# Our Impactful Movement

ZWE connects and supports a vibrant network of local and national NGOs from all around Europe sharing common values and objectives and working together for a zero waste future.

The member organisations promote zero waste in line with the zero waste hierarchy, manage the network of zero waste municipalities, and engage with decision-makers and companies.

ZWE network is a space for growth, inspiration and innovation, in which members work together in a united, strong voice to scale up positive change in Europe.



## In 2021, we...

### Supported the creation of two alliances:

Zero Waste Germany - officially launched as non-profit organisation, Zero Waste Germany unites 11 German non-profit associations as founding members:

- Zero Waste Itzehoe e.V.
- Zero Waste Münster e.V.
- Zero waste Hamburg e.V.
- Rehab Republik e.V. (München)
- Zero Waste e.V. (Berlin)
- Bluepingu e.V. (Nürnberg)
- Forum Plastikfrei e.V. (Augsburg)
- Transition Town Donauwörth e.V.
- Zero Waste Köln e.V.
- Küste gegen Plastik e.V. (Niebüll)
- Zero Waste Kiel e.V.

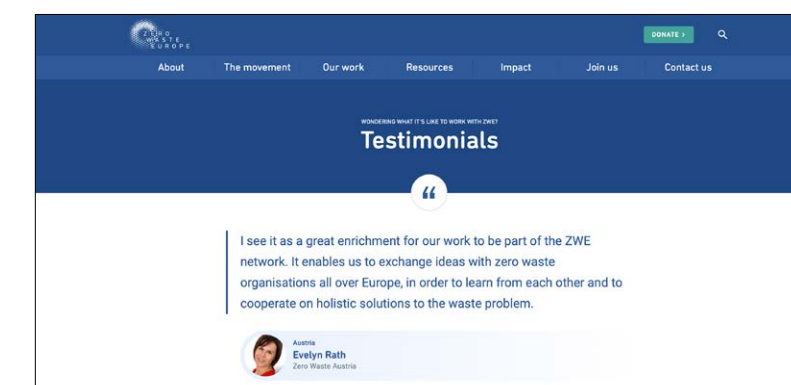
The alliance focuses on zero waste activities within businesses, cities, lifestyle, and policy aspects. The creation of this alliance marks a big step towards a stronger zero waste voice and presence in German soil.

Zero Waste Cyprus Alliance - an informal alliance composed of 4 local Cypriot NGOs with a common vision in the areas in waste prevention, waste management, and the mainstreaming of solutions (including reusables and refillables).

### Debuted a Testimonials page on the Zero Waste Europe Website

Where our members share their experiences of belonging to Zero Waste Europe and how that helped them bridge the gap between local/national action and EU-wide activities.

**Katja Sres**  
Ekologi brez meja  
**Slovenia**



### Welcomed two new organisations to the Zero Waste Europe network as Associate Members:



→ Recycling Network Benelux (RNB) - active in the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, RNB works to reduce resource use in our society and prevent waste by pushing for ambitious legislation and corporate responsibility.



→ Friends of the Earth - SPZ, Slovakia - focusing on minimalisation of pollution caused by waste and toxic substances. Among other things, the organisation is very active on the anti-incineration, policy, and zero waste cities fronts.

With these new additions, ZWE counted with 32 member organisations in 28 European countries in its network by the end of 2021.



# Success Stories from the network

Ekologi brez meja  
**SLOVENIA**

## Major Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) reform passed

with Environmental Protection Act update

"This reform finally harmonises our systems, transposes Waste Framework Directive updates, and decisively tries to end EPR malpractice - most notably in the packaging sector. After years of crises and legislative attempts, we breathed a collective sigh of relief when, with our help, the reform managed to pass through in the Slovenian Parliament (with all our demands!) - and do so before the looming elections! It took concerted efforts of the government, civil society organisations, public waste management companies, some producer responsibilities organisations and media, which would be a good model to replicate, save for the fact that it was born out of enmity. It will take a few years for the law to take full effect, so our constructive vigilance must continue!"



Zero Waste Latvia  
**LATVIA**

## Skirobio

Innovative campaign on bio-waste collection

"Skirobio is a full-scale campaign informed citizens about the separate collection of bio-waste, its benefits, and its practicalities by engaging with press, influencers, and policymakers."



Zero Waste Belgium  
**BELGIUM**

## Camps Zero Dechet (Zero Waste Camps)

"Camp Zero Dechet equips camp leaders with the skills and knowledge to reduce their waste during the camp, as well as making the whole experience more sustainable and environmentally-focused."

Zero Waste France  
**FRANCE**

## Reseau Consigne

Creation of a reuse label as part of the network of Deposit Return Systems (DRS) entrepreneurs

"To further France's transition towards a circular economy, Réseau Consigne has launched the national reuse label 'RAPPORTEZ-MOI POUR RÉEMPLOI' to help consumers make better choices for the planet."



UKWIN  
**UNITED KINGDOM**

## Cancellation of the proposal for an incinerator in Alton

"This victory came as a very pleasant surprise, that was brought about by the determination of local campaigners. Not only was the campaign up against a large multinational corporation - Veolia - but they were also swimming against the tide of their County Council's Planning Department. This victory means that, in the event Veolia decides to appeal the refusal, they would face the combined might of the Council and the community. Our sincere hope for the people of Alton and the surrounding area is that Veolia will accept this defeat, and that more and more decision-makers will reject proposals for new waste incineration capacity anywhere in the UK. With this surprise victory in Alton, alongside the moratorium in Wales, the Scottish incineration review, and the refusal of an incinerator in Northern Ireland, the tide certainly seems to be turning in our favour!"

Friends of the Earth Cyprus  
**CYPRUS**

## Creation of the Zero Waste Alliance Cyprus

"The Zero Waste Alliance Cyprus is a coalition of four member organisations that work towards a sustainable, just future through work on food waste, transitioning away from single-use plastics, and working with municipalities to advocate for zero waste practices. We felt that getting together as an Alliance would help us build on the expertise of each other; exchange valuable information; develop joint strategies and campaigns; and, ultimately, amplify our voice at the national level."



Zero Waste Italy  
**ITALY**

## Accademia Rifiuti Zero Mediterraneo

(Mediterranean Zero Waste Academy)

"The Accademia Rifiuti Zero Mediterraneo creates a space for exchange between academics, municipalities, and zero waste experts, working to protect the unique ecosystems of the Mediterranean coast."





# Success Stories

## from our work with GAIA

In 2021, as part of our work with our mother organisation GAIA, we provided systematic support to groups in the Global South to bust the European incineration myth (i.e the myth that incineration is working well in Europe and, therefore, is desirable everywhere else). We also took part in joint activities to increase the awareness and impact of the global zero waste movements. Among the main collaborations of 2021, we highlight:



### Beyond Recovery: GAIA's Global Day of Action 2021

We advocated together with the other GAIA global regions for a future where zero waste practices drive clean air and water, more and better jobs, and a healthy environment for our families and communities, as our planet returns to a life-sustaining pathway where nothing and no one is wasted. Under this global campaign, we produced joint publications, hosted thematic webinars, and promoted the opportunity to create a fairer world for all.



### Publication of the "New Business Models Cutting Back on Single-Use Plastic" report

- A collaboration between the Sustainable Consumption Institute of the University of Manchester and Zero Waste Europe, the report counted with insights and support from several GAIA and BFFP members. This publication amplified and raised the visibility of zero waste, plastic-free businesses in Southeast Asia, with insightful case studies showcasing their resilience and potential for replication.



Presence at the COP26 - as GAIA's regional branch in Europe and as a member of BFFP, Zero Waste Europe was represented in the delegation that travelled to Glasgow (Scotland) for COP26 in November 2021 to further advocate for action on climate change. The delegation participated in, and organised, several events within the COP26's negotiation space on the link between plastics and climate change, and on the promotion of zero waste solutions as climate mitigation opportunities. The delegation members were often interviewed by high-level media outlets present at the conference.





# Success Stories

from our hosted coalitions and movements

**Break Free From Plastic Europe / Rethink Plastic alliance (BFFP and RPa)**

2021 was a year of scaling-up for the BFFP's European-lead #WeChooseReuse campaign, born out of the wish to push for ambitious and robust reuse solutions to the plastic pollution crisis. The campaign kept on gaining commitments from all across the European continent, as well as more support for concrete actions - including a proposal for decision-makers; a Zero Waste Business open letter; and a Zero Waste Cities open letter.



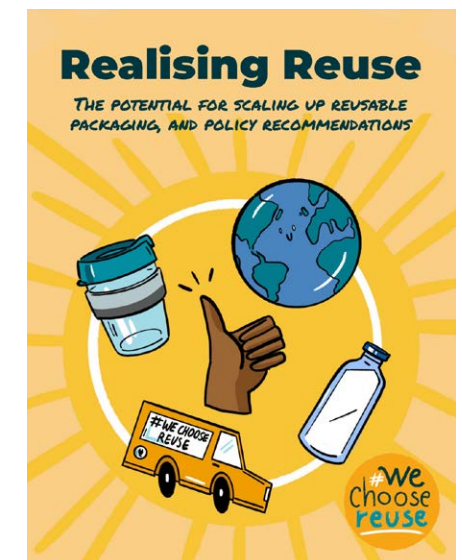
Throughout the year, BFFP Europe's Intersectionality Matters process created a space for representatives from different underrepresented groups to talk about their experiences of marginalisation in relation to plastic pollution and environmental awareness campaigning. They also shared their perspective on making the movement's work more reflective of their position on these issues in our society. These discussions have been hugely valuable in informing the revision of the movement's strategy through an intersectional lens.

When it comes to the RPa and their milestones within the Brussels policy arena, the examples below come to mind as key 2021 victories:



[The publication of the Realising Reuse report \(July\)](#)

Based on a study conducted by Circular Economy Portugal, this publication highlights the capacity for reuse to thrive in the packaging sector with the right sector specific targets and policy frameworks, thus contributing significantly to circular economy and Paris Agreement objectives while saving companies and consumers money. Besides being a very popular document amongst the RPa audiences (with over 67 million views), the report was also mentioned by the World Economic Forum.



[The publication of the "Moving on from single-use plastics: how is Europe doing" assessment \(July\)](#)

Co-authored by the BFFP movement, this document assessed policy measures adopted by EU countries to phase out single-use plastics. The findings show that further ambition is urgently needed, and was published as the period for EU Member States to transpose the Single-Use Plastics Directive was finishing.





# Our Impactful Work

As detailed in our Strategic Framework, we create impact by working at different levels - from European to local level - and in different ways - from implementing local zero waste strategies to influencing European legislation. We foster change by providing vision and knowledge, as well as by facilitating creation of local, national, and international networks and movements.

As such, in 2021 we have continued to increase our impact by working on all these fronts, building new alliances and partnerships and exploring new ways to advance the transition towards zero waste.

## EU Policy

From a policy perspective, 2021 has generally been a year of preparations as many files have been delayed by the European Commission. Yet, we have managed to influence the inclusion of the ban of waste shipments outside the OECD in the Waste Shipment Regulation; been instrumental in having the European Parliament adopt its first ever resolution in favour of access to safe, fair, and circular menstrual products; helped to call for the end incineration funding as part of the EU methane strategy; and to ensure the call for the inclusion of a residual waste target.

Despite the legislative delays, we have relentlessly worked to ensure an ambitious proposal for the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive; a forward-looking EU Strategy for Sustainable Textiles; and a Sustainable Product Initiative that is fit for purpose. We also prepared the ground for the revision of the Waste Framework Directive. We hope to reap the fruits of this work in the course of 2022 and 2023.



## Production and Redesign

### Prevention, Reuse and Packaging

With 2021 being a preparation year for the upcoming launch of the European Commission's Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) revised proposal, we dedicated many of our efforts to the promotion of reusable packaging options and to supporting the implementation of widespread reuse systems across Europe.

A good example of this, and of the potential for truly circular synergies between industry players and civil society actors, is the November [joint statement between ZWE, UNESDA and Natural Mineral Waters Europe urging the EU to acknowledge the role of Deposit Return Systems \(DRS\)](#) in a truly circular economy. The statement also calls for the support of the establishment of minimum requirements for new DRS in the revision of the PPWD - something which, thanks to this document, the European Commission is now [strongly considering](#) (and wasn't doing so before). ZWE was also thanked by the European Commission for the clarity of these essential requirements, and for a strategic, fruitful collaboration with industry players on such a cross-cutting topic.



### Food Contact Materials

As part of our work within the Food Contact Materials coalition and their importance for a truly circular economy, we kept raising awareness on the harmful effects of toxic packaging for both human health and the environment. Specifically, we published and promoted two factsheets on the ways [toxic chemicals in food packaging put our health at risk](#); and on the how [EU regulations must take a preventive approach](#) to ensure food contact materials are safe to use, reuse, and recycle.

### Reusable Nappies

Enabling conditions for the widespread, systemic transition to reuse of everyday items is at the core of much of ZWE's work. In the context of [#ReusableNappyWeek 2021](#), we shone a light on the impacts related to the production and consumption of conventional single-use baby nappies. In addition, we showcased examples of reusable solutions for this issue and their benefits, demanding policy change at the European, national, and local level.

### Menstrual Items

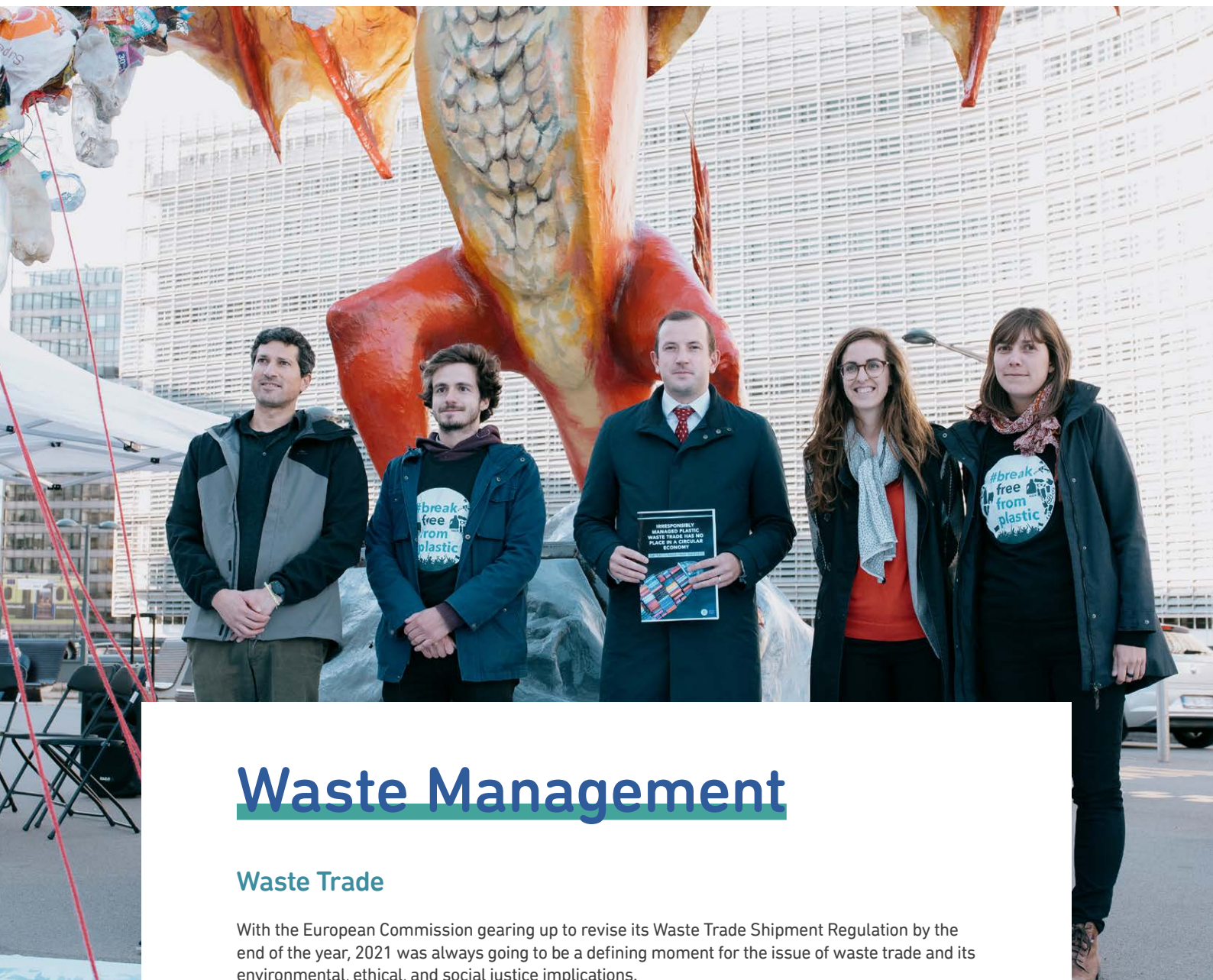
Once again, we took part in the annual Environmenstrual Week celebrations, where our [Bloody Manifesto](#) (in collaboration with BFFP Europe) built up on the support and attention gathered in 2020; where we amplified our members' work on period poverty and circular menstrual items at the local level; and where we launched the [Period Power](#) campaign hub.

By the end of 2021, the Bloody Manifesto had been signed by 20 MEPs, 28 organisations, and 229 individuals. In addition to its popularity amongst civil society and the general public, the Bloody Manifesto contributed to the adoption of a resolution on the situation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the EU by the European Parliament in June 2021. Although non-binding, this resolution sends a strong signal to EU member states to act swiftly on ensuring access to safe, fair, and circular menstrual products for everyone in their national territories. The Bloody Manifesto was also a key advocacy tool during our [Trans Day of Visibility activities](#), when we highlighted the need for access to circular menstrual products for all menstruators.

We already saw some promising results stemming from this momentum, such as the distribution of free (and especially reusable) menstrual products by the Government of Catalonia to tackle period poverty.







# Waste Management

## Waste Trade

With the European Commission gearing up to revise its Waste Trade Shipment Regulation by the end of the year, 2021 was always going to be a defining moment for the issue of waste trade and its environmental, ethical, and social justice implications.

In preparation for this, and in collaboration with BFFP Europe, we launched [The Plastic Waste Trade Manifesto](#) in April 2021, urging the EU to ban all exports of plastic waste. The Manifesto had been signed by 89 civil society organisations across the world, as well as 37 Members of the European Parliament, by the moment it was formally presented to EU Commissioner for Environment, Virginijus Sinkevicius.

This official handover of the Manifesto happened on 29 September 2021 during the Waste Trade Action that the Rethink Plastic alliance - of which ZWE is a member - organised in front of the European Commission's Berlaymont building in Brussels. A large-scale model of a dragon spewing plastic waste and a world map showing the main waste trade routes from Europe - with receiving countries being predominantly in the Global South - was displayed throughout the day, raising awareness amongst passers-by of the harmful impact of waste shipments.

The Waste Trade Action included also included a press conference moment with Commissioner Sinkevicius, Sara Matthieu MEP, and representatives of the Rethink Plastic alliance and its members organisations.

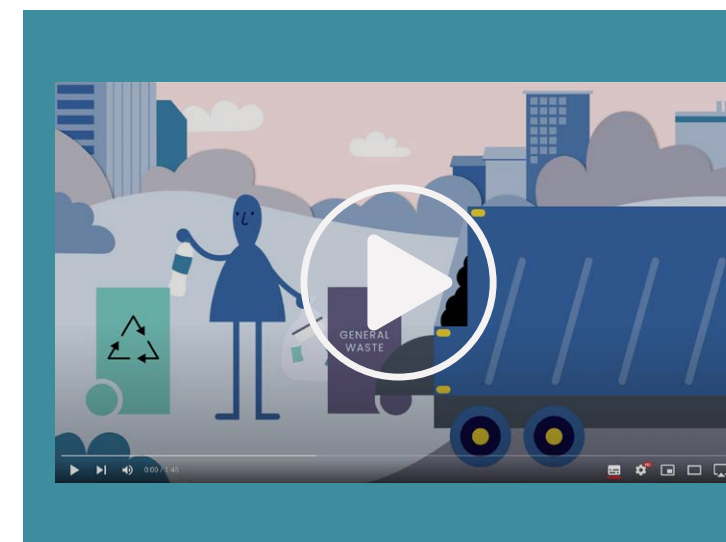
Our efforts throughout the year were rewarded in November, when the European Commission finally tabled its revised Waste Trade Shipment Regulation. While it still could be more ambitious in certain provisions, the new proposal strongly restricts exports of waste to non-OECD countries. We will keep following and advocating around this important piece of legislation throughout 2022, when it will reach the European Parliament and the EU Council of Ministers for further discussion and possible amendments.

## Residual Waste Cap

The current EU residual waste policy lacks emphasis on waste reduction, which then creates a paradox – it doesn't matter how much is waste produced, only the percentage of it that is landfilled. With this in mind, there is a need for a new policy framework that prioritises the minimisation of generated residual waste.

In 2021, we published the ["Rethinking the EU Landfill Target"](#) report, providing solid evidence that a residual waste cap would not only reward waste reduction efforts, but also give proper focus to its high place in the waste hierarchy. More importantly, it would position residual waste reduction as the way forward towards circularity and sustainability.

The report was also officially launched and presented during the accompanying event ["Making the EU residual waste policy fit for a circular economy"](#). As a result of our efforts, ZWE was invited for a meeting with the European Commission to further discuss the issue of a residual waste cap and how approaches such as MRBT (see below) can contribute to it.



## MRBT

Our work on end-of-pipe solutions for waste management took a step further in 2021 with our new focus on the promising approach of Material Recovery and Biological Treatment (MRBT). Meant to manage residual waste (i.e. the waste that cannot be recycled or composted) in a way that fits the requirements of the current climate emergency, MRBT should become a bridge strategy for managing residuals within a circular economy.

More materials and activities on MRBT can be expected from ZWE in 2022 - but why not watch our [MRBT video explainer](#) for now to get a better understanding of what this method entails?



## Food Waste

As usual, we took the occasion of the annual European Week of Waste Reduction (EWWR) to gather and promote best practices from all across Europe on sustainable resource and waste management. In 2021, and with precious support from our member organisations, our EWWR materials focused on:

- Lithuania's law for donation of food waste;
- The Catalan law on food waste prevention;
- France's law promoting bulk and reusable packaging; and
- Ireland's plan on single-use and plastic packaging.



## Anti-incineration

In 2021, many of our anti-incineration efforts contributed to the exclusion of the use of waste incineration residues from the draft of the EU Taxonomy for a Circular Economy. Published by the European Sustainable Finance Platform in August 2021, the document does not include these residues in the scope of activities considered “sustainable”.

Additionally, our advocacy work was a driving factor in excluding waste incineration from activities used to reduce emissions from landfills. The European Parliament’s resolution on an EU strategy to reduce methane emissions of October 2021 called for the end of the use of EU funding for waste incineration; reiterated the need to decrease waste incineration; and stated that biological treatment options for waste should always be prioritised.

Thanks to our lobbying efforts, and to those of our members, we were able to ensure that no carbon capture and storage (CCS) projects for incinerators were funded by the European Commission’s Innovation Fund, thus encouraging the funding of more circular waste management approaches.

Furthermore, our numerous publications throughout the year on the harmful effects of incineration had an influence on the decision of the European Parliament’s ENVI Committee rapporteur to propose the inclusion of waste municipal incinerations in the scope of the EU ETS, putting a carbon price on their CO2 emissions.

Last but certainly not least, in 2021 we carried out all the first instances of on-site biomonitoring research on the harmful effects of incineration emissions for both human health and the environment. These, in addition to our biomonitoring research video explainer, fed into our 2022 campaign “The True Toxic Toll - biomonitoring of incineration emissions”.



## A new narrative on recycling

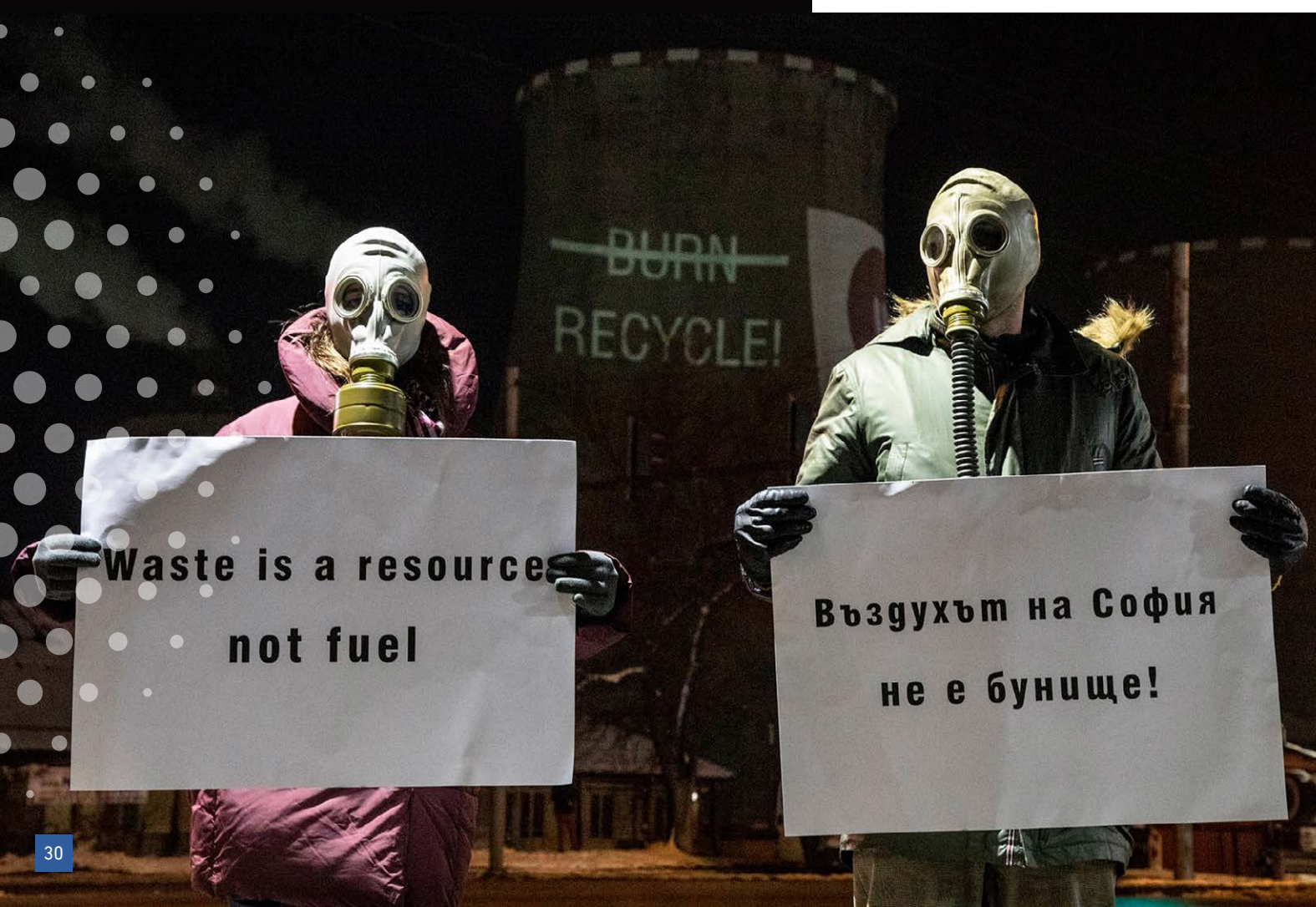
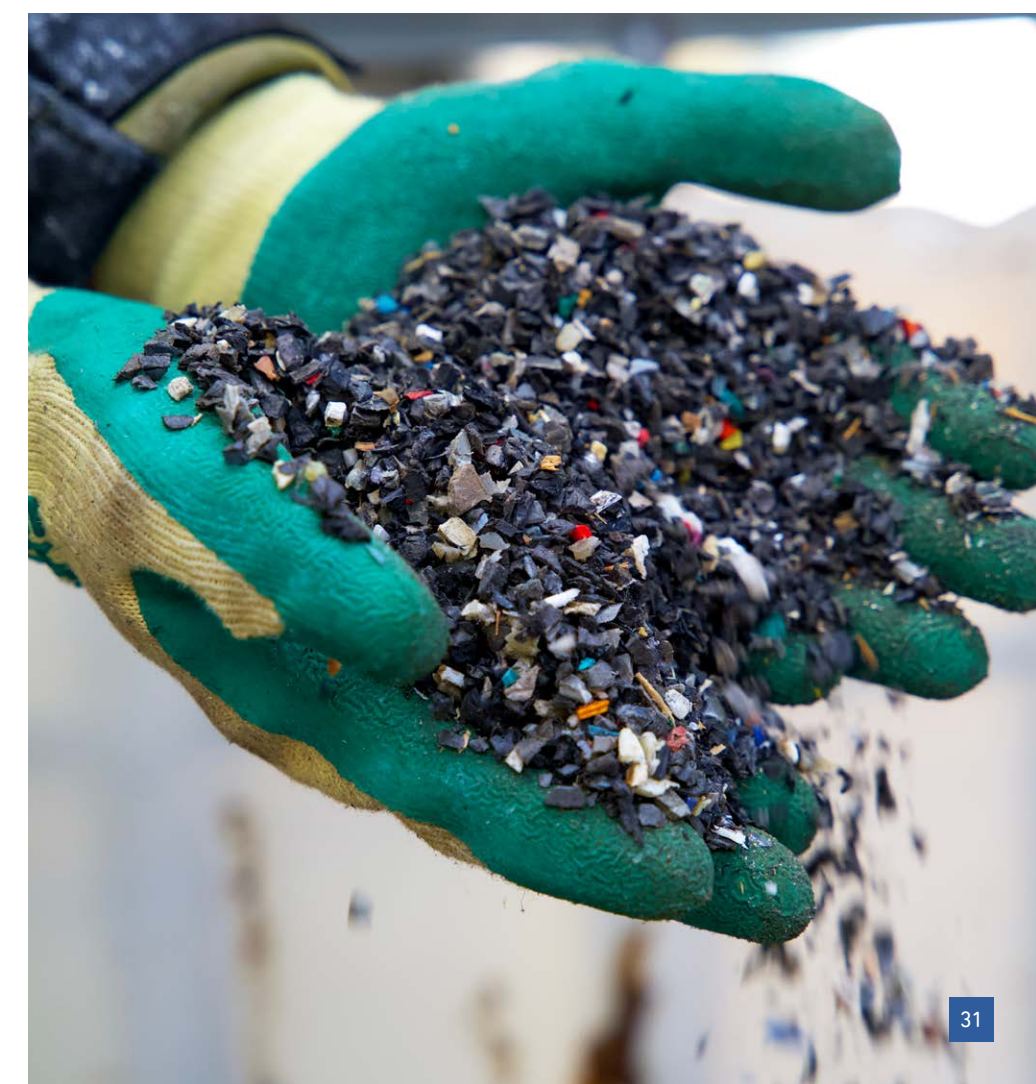
In 2021, ZWE contributed to the discussions around definition of recyclability and recycled content, within ongoing revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive and work led by Eunomia. Our narrative, which also included a number of meaningful exchanges with CITEO and Eunomia, focused on ensuring that recyclability is measured against real-world existence of collection, sorting, and recycling schemes. We also started conversations with UNESDA on setting up legal incentives for closed loop recycling, and effective and efficient high-quality recycling.

Moreover, ZWE advocated for recycling ensuring clean and non-toxic material cycles through joint papers presenting the complexity of health and environmental issues associated with the entire life cycle of polyvinyl chloride (PVC); and a through request for setting equal-stringent thresholds for lead in virgin and recycled PVC. It should be noted that a number of restrictions related to PVC and related chemicals have been included in the 2021 draft EU Restrictions Roadmap under the Chemical Strategy for Sustainability.

## Chemical Recycling

Our main 2021 contributions to the discussion around plastics-to-plastics chemical recycling focused on the need to ensure that any new technologies on this front are properly environmentally assessed before being considered for scale-up; and on ensuring that it does not become a distraction and a diversion of investment from tried-and-tested circular waste management options.

With 2022 promising more developments on our side on this issue, it should however be noted that the draft of the EU Taxonomy for a Circular Economy, published by the European Sustainable Finance Platform in August 2021, set relatively strict requirements for chemical recycling (namely, on batch-based mass-balance approaches).





# Local Zero Waste Cities



## Zero Waste Cities

As of the end of 2021, ZWE had 18 members working on zero waste cities with their municipalities. Over the past year, we have had 35 new Zero Waste Cities commitments across Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Ukraine, Latvia, Belgium, and Bulgaria. This number is only expected to increase in 2022 while also bringing new countries into the fold - such as Greece, Portugal and Cyprus.

More municipalities with zero waste strategies to work towards is a directly measurable indicator on our advancement towards zero waste in Europe - ZWE is using these strategies to monitor progress and to ensure local actions are ambitious and impactful.

We capped off the year with [another edition of the State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report](#), the most comprehensive overview of the ZWE's work on zero waste cities. With chapters written by both ZWE and GAIA members, the report showcased new success stories, challenges, and opportunities of the zero waste journey of several European - and overseas - cities.



## New Financing Models

2021 was the year when Zero Waste Europe started its work on [new financing models](#) for the implementation of zero waste strategies - namely, through the creation and use of Zero Waste Bonds.

We believe the transition to zero waste should be tackled holistically, from empowering communities to key stakeholders, without being afraid to push both bottom-up and low-tech solutions. This will be done taking into account the integration of social needs where technical solutions are implemented.

By issuing a Zero Waste Bond, ZWE is committed to creating a precedent, proving that, with the right commitments (including financing), we can shift to a zero waste society and accelerate it. By creating key models ready to be implemented in different environments, we want to also demonstrate that we can start small and think big; and that it only takes one (big) step to shift the paradigm and engage in systemic changes.

By the end of 2021, we had partnered with Dalberg Management on the development and implementation of the Zero Waste Bonds, with community composting identified as the first key area of action.

## MiZA

16 March 2021 was a milestone for the wider implementation of zero waste strategies across Europe. On that day, the [Mission Zero Academy \(MiZA\)](#) was officially launched as ZWE's knowledge and capacity-building spinoff.

Established as a separate entity from ZWE, MiZA will serve primarily municipalities and SMEs, supporting their access to know-how on the design and implementation of future-proof zero waste and circular strategies. It has a two-fold ambition: providing the appropriate platform to mainstream the knowledge about zero waste, circular practices and techniques to implement them - at the national, regional, and local level; and offering a robust framework to assess and benchmark Europe's best zero waste municipalities and businesses.

MiZA followed its official launch with the debut of the first-ever Zero Waste Cities Certification. Building on over a decade of expertise and data from ZWE's Cities & Communities programme and the work of our members on their countries and regions, the Certification was designed to ensure consistency behind what can be considered a zero waste and circular model at the local level - and protect real zero waste approaches from bogus claims. Above all, it provides a blueprint or a check-list to guide organisations and municipalities on their zero waste journey.

By the end of 2021, MiZA had 13 confirmed Zero Waste Candidate Cities, with 27 other locations going through the decision process. The certification concept has managed to attract completely new countries towards the zero waste scene, as well as bring in bigger cities (Leipzig, Munich, Riga) from existing countries. 2022 should bring more exciting prospects, such as the first-ever cities certified by the Zero Waste Cities Certification, as well as the launch of the Zero Waste Business Label.

It is important to note and praise the work of our members during MiZA's establishment and development process, as well as during the development of the Certification. After a MiZA induction and training process, our members are now promoting and taking a crucial role in the implementation of the Zero Waste Cities Certification at the local level. We hope that, by 2025, 10% of the Europe's population will live in Certified Cities - and, thanks to our members' efforts on the ground, we are sure it will.

## Implementation activities

Staying true to the direction and goals of our new Strategic Framework, Zero Waste Europe focused a significant part of its efforts on taking the contributions and input from our policy and advocacy work and help to transform it into concrete actions on the ground. From the fostering of widespread reuse systems to the launch of our capacity-building spin-off, here are the main victories stemming from our implementation activities.

## RSVP

Having kicked off in May 2021, the [ReuSe Vanguard Project \(RSVP\)](#) went from being an ambitious project proposal to a well run multi-stakeholder process, with some serious implementation prospects for the years to come. Seven partner organisations have become active stakeholders in this project, which acts both as a great tool for collective strategic thinking on reuse and as a convergence point for different projects to support the systemic transition to reuse in key market sectors.

While the RSVP project will be in full swing until the end of 2023, a few great prospects already came out of its 2021 activities:

- We identified 5 products as well-defined leverage points for working group activities and implementing coordinated change.
- We gathered important quantitative and qualitative data on the potential for reuse in different markets, as well as on the challenges and opportunities for each of them.
- The project stakeholders are fully engaged in sectoral processes, building a joint project plan for effective, coordinated actions at the local level.
- RSVP's framework includes activities on funding the transition to reuse, allowing us to build important synergies between ZWE's Consumption & Production and Cities & Communities programmes, as well as the Mission Zero Academy.
- The project has already enabled us to extract key sectoral policy recommendations on reuse.





# Shaping the Conversation

## ZW Live! Webinars

Our [Zero Waste Live! Webinar series](#) has been a flagship activity of our Cities & Communities programme since 2019 and, as usual, its 2021 edition did not disappoint. Over this past year, we hosted 9 webinars under this series, bringing together experts from Europe to discuss zero waste strategies and showcase best practices in various municipalities; and providing knowledge on available tools.

In addition to the Zero Waste Live! Webinar series, and as part of the activities of our Climate, Energy and Air Pollution programme, in October Zero Waste Europe hosted a standalone [webinar](#) on “Making the EU residual waste policy fit for a circular economy”. This online event fostered an open debate on the need to improve both the Landfill Directive and the Waste Framework Directive, highlighting residual waste reduction as a crucial tool to comply with the overarching principles of the EU Circular Economy agenda.

## Events / Actions

24 MARCH

### ZWE Annual General Meeting Round 1

Online

As it happened already in 2020, due to COVID-19 and the health and safety measures in place, our ZWE Annual General Meeting took place virtually and was split into two sessions across the year. In this first session, the ZWE network had the opportunity to celebrate the milestones of 2020 and discuss the plans and activities for the year ahead.

28 AUGUST

### Zero Waste Ambassadors meeting

On-site

As part of our “Building a European Zero Waste Academy” (BEZWA) project with Let’s Do It Foundation (Estonia) and Ekologi brez meja (Slovenia), we organised a Zero Waste Ambassador training in Slovenia. Spanning over 5 days and attended by over 20 people from several European countries, this training focused on how to better provide technical support and guidance to local municipalities so that they can better design, implement, and monitor their own zero waste strategies.

15-17 SEPTEMBER

### ZWE Staff Retreat

On-site

Following all health and safety precautions, we had our first Staff Retreat since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. During these three days, we finalised the ZWE Strategic Framework for 2022-24, took stock of our work and achievements in the first 3 quarters of 2021, prepared the work to be done until the end of the year, and reconnected as a team after so many months of only seeing each other through a screen.

29 SEPTEMBER

### Waste Trade Action

On-site

Our 2021 efforts on waste trade reached its peak during the Waste Trade Action event with RPa and BFFP Europe in Brussels, where the Plastic Waste Trade Manifesto was officially handed to the EU Commissioner for the Environment, Virginijus Sinkevičius.

1 DECEMBER

### ZWE Annual General Meeting Round 2

Online

The second round of our Annual General Meeting was an opportunity for the ZWE network to share their challenges and victories of 2021. Members also approved the new ZWE Strategic Framework 2022-2024, which will serve as the compass for the ZWE network for the next three years.





## Impactful publications

A truly circular economy can only be achieved by empowering stakeholders and citizens alike with accessible and impactful information to become zero waste and circularity change agents in their communities.

In 2021, ZWE kept on creating resources to help our common journey towards a zero waste society and future. With an even greater emphasis on high-quality content and on ensuring the democratisation of our topics for non-expert audiences, we produced 41 publications over the course of 2021 between the [ZWE](#) and [ZWC](#) website. Among these, we highlight:



- [The UNWRAPPED toolkit](#) - a package developed as part of the [UNWRAPPED](#) project to put a spotlight on the human health risks posed by plastics and other food packaging materials. The facts and figures on this toolkit showcase the harmful effects of disposable food packaging on human health.
- [The Story of reWINE](#) - a case study on the Catalonia-based reWINE project showing that wine production and distribution systems can be circular and fully implement reuse practices. The interest and impact of this publication was such across our network and audiences that the case study ended up being translated into 9 languages!
- [The State of Zero Waste Municipalities Report 2021](#) - the second-ever iteration of this report brought us updates on the journeys of Zero Waste Cities across Europe, told new stories from incoming municipalities, and explained in greater detail the links between ZWE's Zero Waste Cities network and the MiZA's Zero Waste Cities Certification process.
- [New Business Models Cutting Back on Single-Use Plastic](#) - this joint study between the University of Manchester and Zero Waste Europe delved into zero waste and plastic-free business models in the Global South, successfully contributing to the reduction of single-use plastic consumption. The study explores these businesses' impact and the key conditions for their replication and growth.
- [Waste Incineration Under the EU ETS](#) - an assessment of climate benefits - commissioned to CE Delft by ZWE, this study shows that, if incineration is included in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS), waste companies will have to buy emission credits for each tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> they emit when treating household, company, and industrial waste. This additional cost of

incineration can act as an incentive for waste prevention and recycling, which will then become more competitive (less costly) than incineration - as well as bringing about social benefits in the form of a higher number of jobs.

→ [Recycled content in plastics: the mass balance approach](#) - 'Chemical recycling' is increasingly being promoted by the industry as a silver bullet solution to plastics recycling. As such, there is ample room for loopholes like the liberal allocation of the mass balance approach to supposedly recycled content. [This position paper](#) and [accompanying infographic booklet](#) provided recommendations to ensure that the methodologies for determining recycled content are developed in a manner which contributes to a circular economy.

Additionally, we wrote 56 blog posts ([37 on the ZWE website](#) and [19 on the ZWC counterpart](#)) - ranging from the work being done in zero waste cities across Europe to examples of how waste management in Europe affects other global regions. Penned by the ZWE staff, our member organisations, and our Zero Waste volunteers, they demonstrate the scope of our work and the diversity of voices within the zero waste movement.

It is also worth celebrating the increase in the number of translations of our publications in 2021 - 25 instances covering 12 different languages - which allow our materials to reach a wider audience, and helps our members in their regional and local efforts. We are expecting this number to be even bigger in 2022!

## ZWE in the media sphere

2021 was a remarkable year for ZWE regarding its media presence and press outreach. With a 62% increase in press mentions and a 31% increase of press contacts in our database, ZWE solidified its positioning as the go-to expert in zero waste strategies and circular economy in Europe at the EU, national, and local level, helping more people become familiar with our stances and different streams of work.

### 14 press releases

1425 media mentions in 2021, including



242

for Climate,  
Energy and  
Air Pollution



58

for Cities  
& Comm-  
unities



68

for Waste  
Trade



625

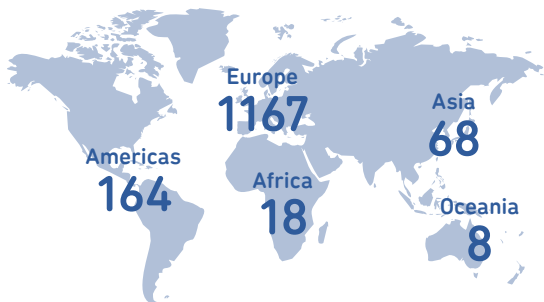
for Con-  
sumption &  
Production



432

on other ZWE  
topics and  
activities

#### Distribution by continent



80% in  
English



followed by Italian,  
Spanish and German

#### Type of media

Press  
Agencies  
19

(times covered by  
different agencies)



Radio  
52



TV  
10

Traditional  
newspapers and  
digital press  
outlets

1315  
hits



## Amplifying our network

In 2021, we continued our monthly interviews with a campaigner from our network in our 'Meet our members' blog series. This series helped us introduce the work of national and local groups to a wider audience, raising awareness of their actions and achievements on an international scale. In November, however, this campaign was revamped into the new ZWE Changemakers series, which puts one of our member organisations in the spotlight each month - specifically, changes that they implement and the impact that they have on the ground. The campaign also includes internal network calls, allowing our member organisations to connect more easily with each other, as well as share knowledge and best practices.

We have also carried out another edition of our 'May is for Members' campaign, showcasing the most impactful victories of our network members from the previous year. As usual, this campaign provided an extra opportunity to support and showcase our members' work, encouraging our community to engage with them and their activities.



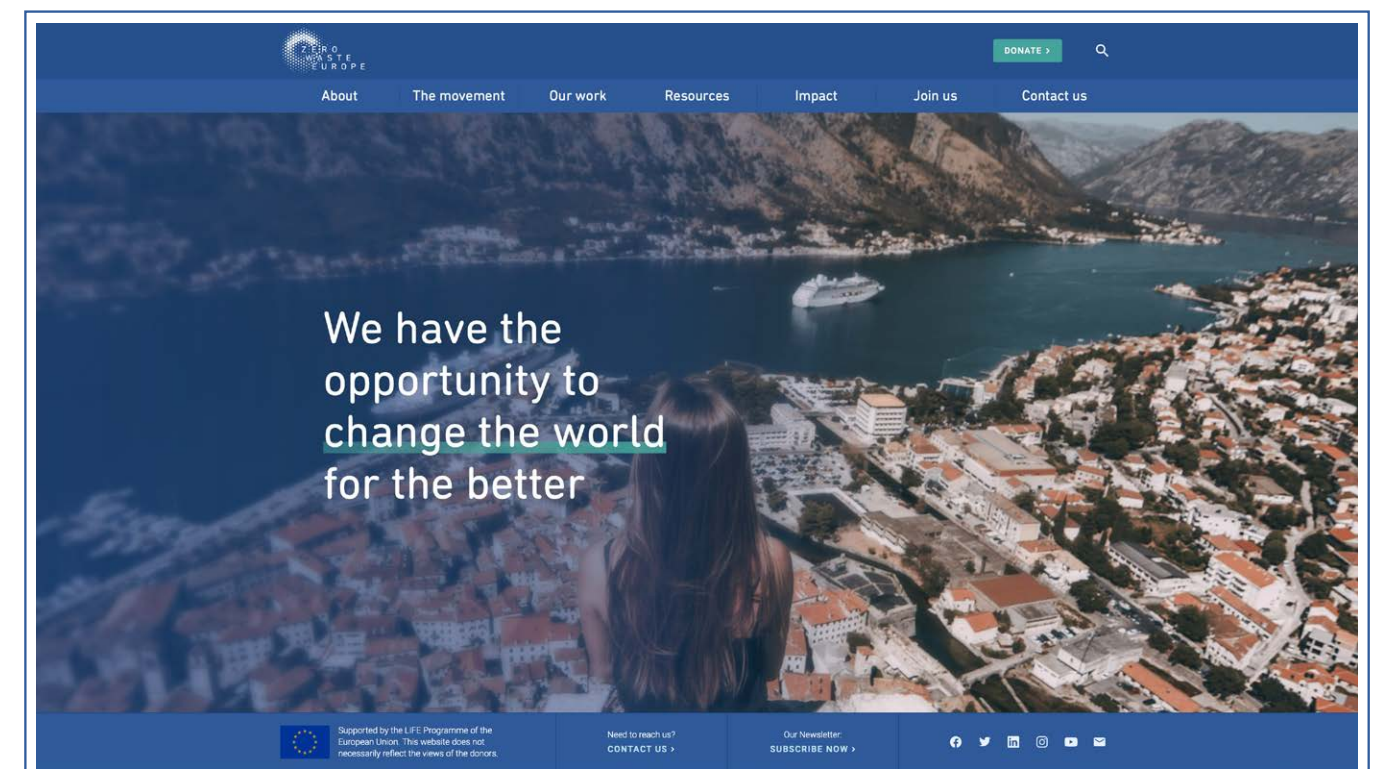
## Getting the ZWE structure fit for a new era

As our scope of work keeps on growing, so does our team and so does the need to have an adequate structure and organisational tools in place. In 2021, our Operations and Management teams dedicated a lot of their efforts to the strengthening of our Human Resources policy and tools.

This resulted in the implementation of new systems and digital tools that make our daily lives easier (from time-tracking to database management), as well as an increase in attraction and retention of talent within our team - which surely helps to reach a zero waste future sooner!



As part of this revamp - and after months of working and gathering inputs from both staff and members - we also launched the new version of the ZWE website in September 2021. The new website provides a better user experience to our community and viewers; offers a clearer explanation of our mission, vision, working topics, alliances, resources, and victories; and enhances the movement-building and network aspect of ZWE by giving more prominence to our members and their achievements.





# Behind the Scenes

In addition to the amazing efforts and support from our membership across the European continent, our victories and achievements could not have happened without the enthusiasm, dedication, and hard work from the Zero Waste Europe staff. Thank you for all your continuous commitment and motivation!

## Meet the team

### Zero Waste Europe Staff



**Caroline Cullière**  
New Financing  
Models Coordinator  
*Joined in 2021*



**Janek Vähk**  
Climate, Energy,  
and Air Pollution  
Programme  
Coordinator  
*Joined in 2015*



NEW

**Lauriane Veillard**  
Chemical Recycling  
and Plastic-to-Fuels  
Policy Officer  
*Joined in 2022*



**Nathan Dufour**  
Consumption  
& Production  
Programme  
Coordinator  
*Joined in 2020*



**Larissa Copello**  
Consumption  
& Production  
Campaigner  
*Joined in 2018*

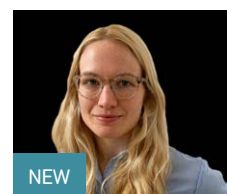


NEW

**Dorota Napierska**  
Policy Officer  
on Toxic-Free  
Consumption &  
Production  
*Joined in 2021*



**Jack McQuibban**  
Cities & Communities  
Programme  
Coordinator  
*Joined in 2019*



NEW

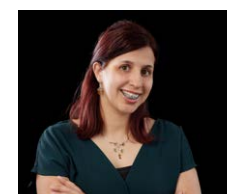
**Theresa Mörsen**  
Waste Policy Officer  
*Joined in 2022*



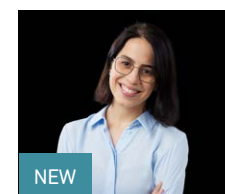
**Kaisa Karjalainen**  
Coordinator of  
the Mission Zero  
Academy  
*Joined in 2020*



**Chiara Padovani**  
Digital Marketing  
& Communications  
Officer of the Mission  
Zero Academy  
*Joined in 2021*



**Ana Oliveira**  
Communications  
Coordinator  
*Joined in 2020*



NEW

**Theresa Bonnici**  
Communications  
Officer  
*Joined in 2021*



**Berta Corredor**  
Press Officer  
*Joined in 2021*



NEW

**Nanna Cornelsen**  
Communications  
Assistant  
*Joined in 2022*



NEW

**Stephanie Yates**  
Network Coordinator  
*Joined in 2022*



**Desi Borisova**  
Finance Officer  
*Joined in 2021*



**Heli Pärna**  
Grants and  
Operations Officer  
*Joined in 2019*



**Alexandra Clipa**  
Administration and  
Events Officer  
*Joined in 2020*



**Joan Marc Simon**  
Executive Director  
*Joined in 2007*



**Esra Tat**  
Associate Director  
*Joined in 2017*



**Katleen Verhelle**  
Operations Director  
*Joined in 2021*

## Zero Waste Europe Board



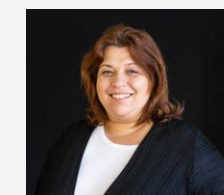
**Rossano Ercolini**  
President of the Board



**Xiaowei Liu**  
Treasurer



**Huub Scheele**  
Secretary



**Antigone Dalamaga**  
Board Member

## ZWE Scientific Committee



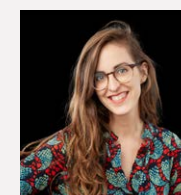
**Enzo Favoino**  
Chair of the Scientific  
Committee

## Our GAIA colleague

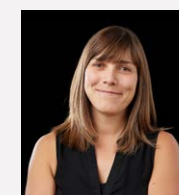


**Mariel Vilella**  
GAIA's Global Climate  
Programme Director  
*Joined in 2010*

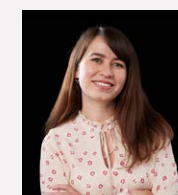
## Our hosted coalition and alliances



**Delphine Lévi Alvarès**  
Coordinator of  
Break Free From  
Plastic Europe and  
the Rethink Plastic  
alliance  
*Joined in 2016*



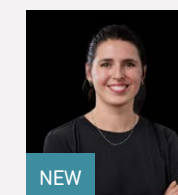
**Justine Maillot**  
Policy Coordinator  
of the Rethink  
Plastic alliance and  
Break Free From  
Plastic Europe  
*Joined in 2019*



**Iveta Cadrova**  
Network  
Coordinator of  
Break Free From  
Plastic Europe  
*Joined in 2019*

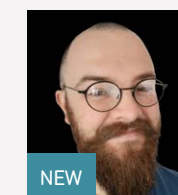


**Niamh Cullen**  
Communications  
Coordinator of the  
Rethink Plastic  
alliance  
*Joined in 2021*



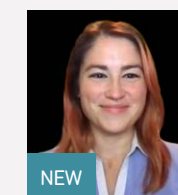
NEW

**Bethany Spendlove Keeley**  
Europe  
Communications  
Officer for Break  
Free From Plastic  
*Joined in 2021*



NEW

**Alexander Colling**  
Grants and  
Operations Officer  
of Break Free From  
Plastic Europe  
*Joined in 2022*



NEW

**Emily Best**  
Campaign  
Coordinator for  
Toxic-Free Food  
Packaging  
*Joined in 2022*

## Cherished colleagues who left us in 2021-22

**Staff who left the ZWE team in 2021-22**  
and to whom we owe a huge thank you



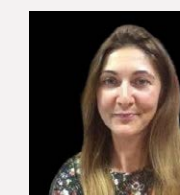
**Rossella Recupero**



**Lys Mehoul-Loko**



**Pierre Condamine**



**Elena Rastei**

**Board members who left the ZWE Board in 2021-22**  
and whom we thank for their unforgettable  
8 years of service and dedication



# Finance and Funding

## Our Funders

- EU Grant: EASME - EU LIFE Operating Grant
- EU Grant: Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation - Collectors
- EU Grant: EACEA - Erasmus+
- EU Grant: Interreg ERDF - CapOnLitter
- Adessium Foundation
- Astra Foundation
- European Climate Foundation
- GAIA
- Kristian Gerhard Jebsen Foundation
- MAVA
- OAK Foundation
- Plastic Solutions Fund
- Telos
- The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Limited
- UMI
- Donations
- Membership Fees

## Our 2021 in-house spending

INCOME	AMOUNT
Foundation Grants	€1,653,099
EU Grants	€414,809
Other Income	€28,971
Of which <i>Membership fees</i>	€8,930
<i>Donations</i>	€5,072
<b>SUBTOTAL IN-HOUSE (inc reserves)</b>	<b>€2,096,878</b>
<b>Subgranting</b>	<b>€1,236,609</b>
<b>TOTAL TURNOVER</b>	<b>€3,333,487</b>

In 2021 we increased our income from the year before through a combination of increased fundraising and new grants, receiving a total of **€3,333,487**.

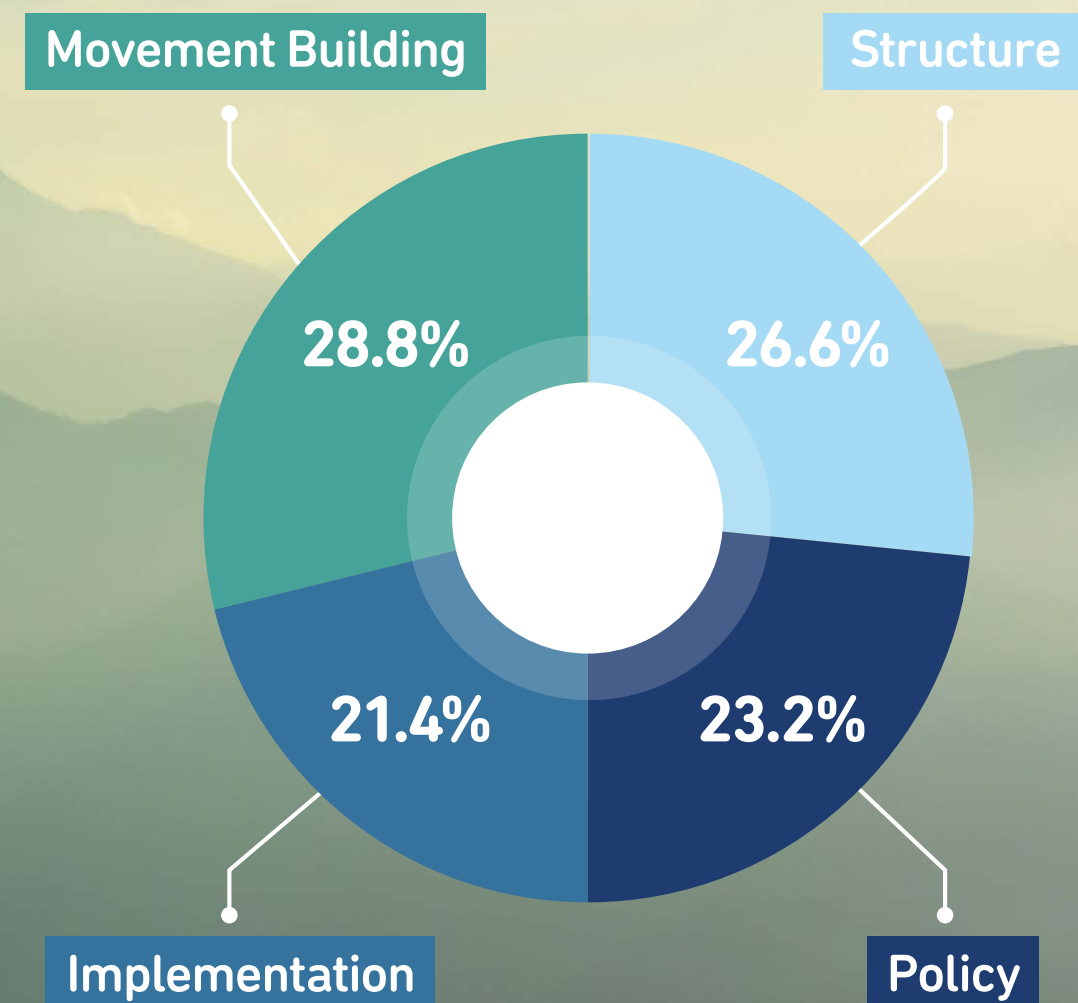
In 2021 we spent a total of **€2,005,378** plus **€1,235,609** in sub-granting. This created an annual turnover of **€3,333,487**.



## Our 2021 in-house spending

COSTS	AMOUNT
Staff Costs	€1,271,137
Consultancies & Services (External Assistance)	€398,338
Activities (Other Direct Costs minus overheads)	€129,698
Travel and Subsistence	€14,531
Overheads (excl. Rent, Depreciation)	€156,334
Rent, Depreciation	€35,340
<b>SUBTOTAL IN-HOUSE</b>	<b>€2,005,378</b>
<b>Subgranting</b>	<b>€1,236,609</b>
<b>RESERVES</b>	<b>€91,500</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>€3,333,487</b>

Another way to understand our spending is by dividing it between areas of strategic importance.





# Thank Yous

An de Smet / Aragon BVBA

Bahar Koyuncu

Blush Design Agency

Bryan Mathers

Camille Delbos

Dalberg Management

DevelopmentAid Recruiting Solutions

Eunomia Research & Consulting

Francesca Tabasso

Friends Productions

Gabriel Lelievre

Grainne Murphy

HD Creatives

Mike Walker

Netika

Inédit

Noble Studio

Noiza

Okay When

RREUSE

Simon Sharp at Sharp Design

Shanar Tabrizi

Slowfood International

Studaro / Yousra El Galai

Tim Clynen

ToxicoWatch

Unleashed

Vidushi Yadav

Waterbear

Our precious zero waste volunteers who helped us with translations, graphic design work, and blog writing

The pioneering cities who have committed to become zero waste and those who have helped us test and pilot several new tools/services over the past year

Our fantastic Members

Our Donors

Our critical Funders

All our allies and like-minded organisations which contributed to our work and publications throughout the year







**Editors:** ZWE Communication Team  
**Design:** Blush design agency  
**Date:** June 2022

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**Cities-related topics:** [cities@zerowasteeurope.eu](mailto:cities@zerowasteeurope.eu)

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[www.zerowastecities.eu](https://www.zerowastecities.eu)  
[www.missionzeroacademy.eu](https://www.missionzeroacademy.eu)



Zero Waste Europe gratefully acknowledges financial assistance from the European Union. The sole responsibility for the content of this publication lies with ZWE. It does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the funder mentioned above. The funder cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.