



Zero Waste Europe Annual Report

2025



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About Zero Waste Europe

Why a zero waste Europe?

At **Zero Waste Europe (ZWE)**, we dream of a future where **environmental protection and human wellbeing work in perfect harmony.**

But dreaming is just the start. We work towards a Europe where:

- Waste is designed out of the system from the beginning;
- Communities thrive through local job creation;
- Nature and people's health are protected regardless of where we live.



This vision extends beyond just preventing and managing waste: it's about fundamentally rethinking how we use resources, from their origin to their final destination, while ensuring no one is left behind in this transition. Our vision for Europe is built on wellbeing, resilience, and sufficiency.

Europe can lead by example on environmental challenges and social inequalities by setting ambitious policies and creating the right incentives. This means empowering forward-thinking communities and businesses already demonstrating the benefits of zero waste strategies, while ensuring these successes reach all citizens. Crucially, we see a Europe where economic prosperity and innovation go hand in hand with environmental protection, creating lasting solutions that benefit current and future generations.





Message from the Director

Dear friends,

If the past year has confirmed anything, it's that the **zero waste transition is no longer a niche conversation, but a practical, political and cultural project unfolding across Europe**. We see it in our cities, in our businesses, and increasingly in the policies that shape our economies.

This annual report tells the story of that reality in motion.

2025 has been about implementing trusted solutions with local roots; from supporting municipalities on their journey to Zero Waste Cities Certification, to laying the groundwork for circular textiles - **we have continued to prove that prevention works, reuse works, and that communities are ready**. More than 14 million Europeans are now connected to zero waste models through our work with cities and Mission Zero Academy.

At the same time, we stepped up our efforts to move policies up the waste hierarchy. The Circular Economy Act presents a real opportunity to raise ambition, reduce residual waste, strengthen enforcement, and rethink incentives - including through a reform of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). We have brought forward new ideas to ensure that prevention and health remain central, and that economic signals reward circular solutions.

But this year has also been about something deeper.

In a context marked by conflict, polarisation and ecological breakdown, it's easy to focus only on what's falling apart. Yet beneath the noise, communities are organising, cities are innovating, and a different resource logic is emerging. This report is evidence of that quieter, steadier momentum.

One of our 2025 milestones has been the adoption of our Strategic Framework 2025-2030. Developed over two years through collective reflection and debate, it is our new network compass.

It reaffirms our commitment to shifting from waste management to resource stewardship, to placing health and wellbeing at the centre, and to strengthening our movement as the foundation of change. **In uncertain times, crafting a shared long-term vision is an act of responsibility and hope.**

Our collective power has been visible throughout the year; from our coordinated action for an incinerator-free future, to joint advocacy on EPR and plastics, to the everyday work of our members across 30 countries - our movement is alive and growing. We have amplified our voice through conferences, media engagement and the growing ambassadorship of our team and members. We have continued investing in our own organisational resilience, ensuring that ZWE remains stable, professional and future-proof in a volatile environment.

None of this happens by chance.

It is built by dedicated members who challenge harmful projects and pilot new solutions; by pioneering cities willing to test ambitious models; by businesses ready to innovate; by partners and allies who strengthen our analysis; by funders who trust us to stay bold; and by a committed team and Board who carry this work forward every day.

In times of turbulence, it is tempting to narrow our horizons. Instead, together, we have widened them.

Thank you for your trust, your courage and your collaboration. The progress reflected in these pages belongs to all of you.

With gratitude and determination,

Esra Tat
Executive Director,
Zero Waste Europe



Our 2030 Vision

Shifting from waste management to resource stewardship, we prioritise the interconnected wellbeing of humans, environment, and ecosystems, while empowering local communities to lead the way.



Our long-term vision

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, takes responsibility for its impact outside its border, and acts as a catalyst for a global transition towards zero waste.



Our mission

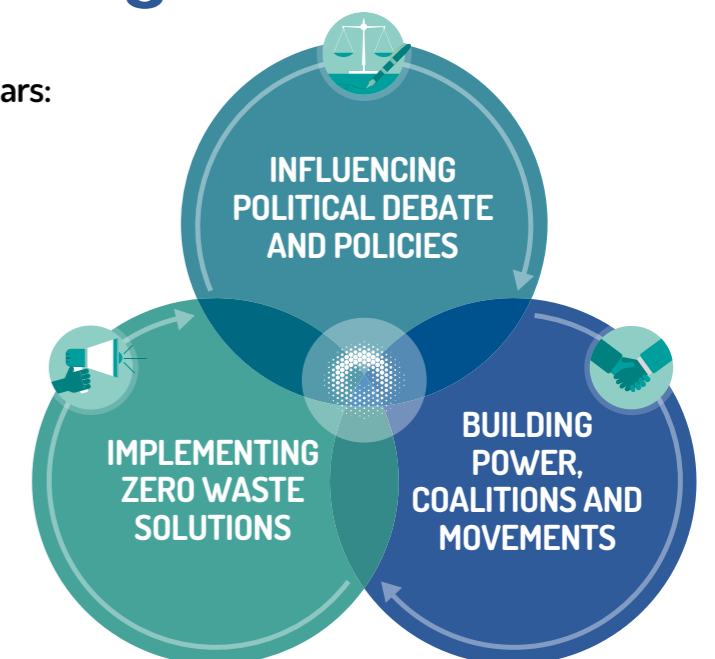
Redesigning our relationship with resources by empowering communities and changemakers across Europe.

As a European network of communities, local leaders, and experts, we work towards a better use of resources and the elimination of waste in our society. This means advocating 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 planet.

Our Theory of Change

Transitioning to a zero waste Europe requires action on 3 interconnected pillars:

- 1 Implementing zero waste solutions on the ground** by mobilising cities, businesses and investment - a "show, don't tell" approach, where we shape and provide living examples of our vision.
- 2 Creating the enabling conditions by influencing policies**, financial frameworks and narratives - with a strong focus on moving higher up in the waste hierarchy and enabling a better management of our resources.
- 3 Movement and power building** by organising and mobilising groups inside and outside our organisation and immediate network - bridging efforts with other movements and building alignment, including among unusual allies and partners.



Our Strategic Framework 2025-2030

We unanimously adopted our Strategic Framework 2025-2030 at our annual Network-Wide Gathering in May 2025.

Developed over nearly two years through an inclusive, collaborative process, the Strategic Framework sets long-term strategic goals that cut across team boundaries and unite both staff-led and member-driven efforts. Rather than focusing on specific waste streams, it prioritises collective impact guided by a robust framework that distinguishes between impact indicators and progress metrics.

More than a document, the Strategic Framework is a living compass to guide our network's decisions and actions through 2030.



Our 2030 vision is a stepping stone to help us achieve our long-term goal of ensuring "an environmentally safe and socially just space for humanity".

Besides the continuation of our historical efforts, our 2030 vision emphasises:

- ✓ Shifting the debate from waste to materials and resources.
- ✓ Putting public health at the heart of solutions.
- ✓ Building the power of local communities and the wider zero waste ecosystem.



[DISCOVER OUR FULL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2025-2030](#)

2025 at a glance

39

members and alliances
across 30 countries



1,227

press mentions



156

signatories on the
"Better than burning"
moratorium against new
waste incineration facilities
in Europe



Cities and municipalities
supported in

17

European countries,
bringing zero waste models
and impact to more than

14
MILLION
EUROPEANS



65

participants from across the
globe for the ZWE back-to-
back organics and movement
building events in Brussels

8500
tonnes

of organic waste separately
collected through the
ForkToFarm project



442

participants in Zero Waste festivals
and conferences across Europe

36

European cities and packaging reuse businesses
rallied for the European Commission to reform
Extended Producer Responsibility systems



OUR IMPACTFUL WORK

In the spotlight

- Our global dimension
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
- Local collaboration



OUR GLOBAL DIMENSION

Lasting environmental and social transformation cannot be achieved without collective action. In 2025, ZWE deepened its movement-building work to help zero waste communities across the continent become more connected, resilient, and equitable. It was a year in which ZWE's global presence came into sharper focus through impactful events and strategic international partnerships.

At ZWE, we recognise that our continent's consumption patterns have consequences for the wider world. Our global work ensures that Europe becomes part of the solution by sharing best practices and knowledge, rather than waste and harmful technologies, while learning from communities around the world who often have much lower environmental footprints than we do.

Through our partnerships with the [Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives](#) (GAIA) and the [Break Free From Plastic](#) movement, we think globally while acting locally. Communities from Manila to Accra to São Paulo are pioneering zero waste solutions that European cities can learn from, just as European policy innovations can inspire change elsewhere. By connecting movements across continents, we amplify our collective power to challenge false solutions like incineration and demand systemic change.

Environmental justice requires that we work in solidarity with partners everywhere, for a circular economy that brings sufficiency, resilience, and wellbeing to all.



Our 2025 impact

- ✓ Positioned zero waste strategies as essential climate solutions at COP30 in Brazil. We worked closely with our wider movement GAIA and partners across continents to show the important role of waste prevention and circular economy approaches in the fight against climate change.
- ✓ Together with GAIA and Break Free From Plastic, we continued advocating for systemic solutions to plastic pollution at the [UN Global Plastics Treaty negotiations](#), from Paris to Busan, and from Ottawa to Geneva.
- ✓ Our first-ever Global Gathering on Organics brought together 34 participants from 24 countries across five continents in Brussels this October. The event focused on how local zero waste approaches can drive global climate action. Communities working to reduce methane emissions from organic waste shared inspiring solutions and best practices, including standout examples such as San Fernando (Philippines), which achieved 89% diversion of municipal waste.
- ✓ Our movement building event welcomed more than 60 global zero waste advocates from around the world. Besides serving as the launch event for our Blueprint for Movement Building, the sessions included powerful presentations from activists in Brazil, Ghana, Spain, and the UK, as well as discussions on how to build, strengthen and adapt movements to suit changing needs.
- ✓ Participated in the 2025 Zero Waste Forum in Türkiye, organised by the Turkish Zero Waste Foundation as part of the UN's global zero waste efforts, placed us within a global arena of policy-makers, practitioners, and civil society leaders. Together with our GAIA colleagues, we brought forward our community-led, solutions-oriented approach grounded in environmental justice and local leadership. An opportunity to defend and promote an ambitious zero waste vision.
- ✓ Presented our zero waste textile policy proposals at the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Zero Waste webinar, with a focus on circular and toxic-free material flows.
- ✓ Helped launch the EU LAN BREF process to set a gold standard for mandatory environmental performance for landfills under the Industrial Emissions Directive, with a focus on methane, leachate, air emissions, soil and circular economy measures. We expect this process to be referenced as a best practice standard globally.
- ✓ Supported Latin American anti-incineration campaigns through webinars and evidence-sharing, providing research on pollution from so-called "safe" European incinerators, including persistent organic pollutants contamination.
- ✓ Contributed to the first training of the [Global DRS Platform](#) (officially launched in April 2025) through our capacity-building spin-off, Mission Zero Academy.

Key 2025 Publications

- ☰ A blueprint for movement building ([toolkit](#))
- ☰ Why movement building matters: a global conversation in Brussels ([blog post](#))
- ☰ Global Plastics Treaty series ([blog posts](#))
- ☰ Insights from COP30: reflections on zero waste, methane, and the growing momentum for real solutions ([blog post](#))
- ☰ Bridging continents, building change: stories from the Global Gathering on Organics ([blog post](#))
- ☰ "We need political momentum to launch the best Deposit Return System in the shortest possible time" ([blog post](#))

Key 2025 Numbers

34 COP30 events across 11 pavilions had GAIA members (including ZWE) as speakers

78 participants enrolled in the Global DRS Platform training courses in 2025

94 global participants in Brussels for the ZWE back-to-back organics and movement building events



MEMBER STORY

Global knowledge, local leadership: the rationale behind the Global DRS Platform

[Retorna](#) has been campaigning for the implementation of zero-waste policies in Spain for more than a decade. In particular, they have advocated for a Deposit and Return System (DRS) for both refillable and one-way beverage containers, sharing knowledge with local stakeholders and learning from the strategies developed across different networks.

Along this journey, and thanks to their shared language, they have built strong connections with organisations in South America. Inspired by their vision, last year Retorna partnered with ZWE to expand and strengthen knowledge of DRS systems, enabling countries in the Global South to adapt this tool to their local realities and lead implementation to tackle beverage packaging litter and its social and environmental impacts.

In just one year, this initiative, named the [Global Deposit and Return Platform](#), has brought together NGOs, industry, academia, and public administrations through conferences, workshops, and webinars. It has also launched the DRS Academy, offering two courses that provide essential knowledge and key insights to advocate for a DRS.

And this is only the beginning. Keep an eye on the project and get in touch with Retorna if you would like to get involved.

EXTENDED PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY (EPR)

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) – i.e., producers being responsible for the financial and operational costs of the products they place on the market throughout the entire lifecycle – has been in place since the 1990s. However, addressing its current flaws is essential to advancing the circular economy and Europe’s competitiveness.

The European Union’s focus on increasing Europe’s strategic autonomy has made it imperative to redesign EPR. A new vision for EPR will allow us to accelerate our circular economy policies and actions, and improve the current systems which have become institutional obstacles to waste preventions.

Key 2025 Publications

- ☰ Designing EPR to foster the EU’s competitiveness and strategic autonomy ([study](#))
- ☰ Beyond waste management: EPR to finance circularity ([joint letter](#))
- ☰ Transposing textiles EPR: the EU state of play in 2025 ([report](#))
- ☰ Ending the era of single-use plastic ([manifesto](#))
- ☰ How can the EU Circular Economy Act unlock the potential of EPR? ([webinar](#))



Our 2025 impact

- ✔ Put forward our vision for the future of EPR at the Zero Waste Festival in Barcelona with the launch of “Designing EPR to foster the EU’s competitiveness and strategic autonomy” study. This publication proposes a two-pillar plan (system optimisation and circular economy enabler) for EPR in the context of the upcoming EU Circular Economy Act.
- ✔ Started the EU-funded **LIFE4EPR** project to design and test a pilot European EPR register, laying the groundwork for future EU-wide implementation. Carried out by a consortium led by Fundacio ENT, the project identifies strengths, persistent challenges, and critical gaps in data and enforcement in EPR schemes across Europe. ZWE leads stakeholder consultation and policy recommendations processes within **LIFE4EPR**.
- ✔ Launched the ZWE-led **Strengthening the Implementation of Circular Textiles Strategies in the EU** (STICT) project, together with Ekologi brez meja, Zero Waste Belgium, Zero Waste Estonia, Fair Resource Foundation, and TEXroad. Funded by the Laudes Foundation, STICT is laying the groundwork for the obligation to set up mandatory EPR schemes for textiles in 2027-28. The project connects our EU policy, network, and local implementation/cities expertise, whilst aligning all levels of governance with our zero waste vision for textiles.
- ✔ Became an agenda-setter on EPR discussions in Brussels through our work, including our webinar on reuse and EPR in the context of the Circular Economy Act; our convenor role amongst cities and progressive businesses calling for a reformed EPR; our funded projects on this topic; and our cities and businesses manifesto for EPR to break the single-use plastic bias.



Key 2025 Numbers

38 civil society organisations urged a reboot of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in a ZWE-led letter to European Commission Executive Vice-Presidents Teresa Ribera and Stéphane Séjourné and Commissioner Jessika Roswall

36 European cities – including Riga, Paris, Tallinn, and Brussels – and businesses from the packaging reuse sector rallied behind an open manifesto calling on the European Commission to reform EPR systems

MEMBER STORY

Fair Resource Foundation steps up where textile EPR falls short

Extended Producer Responsibility for textiles has been in place in the Netherlands since July 2023, but significant problems remain. Poor governance, limited government oversight, excluded stakeholders, and a lack of transparency have hindered progress.

To address this, Fair Resource Foundation established Collectief Circulair Textiel (CCT), a producer responsibility organisation built on different principles. CCT focuses on transparency, social justice, and driving real circular change across the entire textile chain.

CCT builds sustainable partnerships in collection, sorting, and recycling; promotes reuse and repair; prevents the destruction of unsold goods; and engages directly with policy-makers to shape fairer rules that reward genuinely sustainable producers rather than penalising them.

LOCAL COLLABORATION

ZWE's work is based on, and informed by, local realities and experiences thanks to our Europe-wide network and countless local partners and allies. Without their efforts on the ground, there would be no evidence to support our zero waste policies and models. Likewise, they are the ones who turn EU-mandated legislation into real life actions, bringing change and benefits to communities and local contexts.

Our collaboration with members on implementation projects has allowed us to expand areas of local action, and help local communities speak up about their needs, wellbeing, and future.

Key 2025 Publications

- Biemonitoring: empowering communities for a healthier, cleaner environment ([video](#))
- Zero Waste Cities ([website hub](#))
- The State of Zero Waste Municipalities - 5th edition ([report](#))
- How the carbon calculator translates zero waste strategies into climate benefits - the case of Barcelona ([case study](#))
- The hidden environmental pollution near the cement plant in Turňa nad Bodvou ([blog post](#))
- The True Toxic Toll ([project page](#))



Our 2025 impact

- Final stages of The True Toxic Toll biomonitoring research on the toxic effects of waste incineration emissions on human health and the environment across impacted communities in France, the Spanish Basque Country, and the Netherlands. Local communities used our research findings with ToxicoWatch to advocate for full monitoring of incineration emissions and for an incineration-free future.
- Launched in 2024, our Prevention Pioneers Network took its first major step in 2025 - bringing together 12 European cities across 9 countries, including Paris, Tallinn, and Brussels, behind the [Break the Single-Use Bias manifesto](#). This reflects three years of relationship building via the Elevating Reuse in Cities (ERIC) project and the Reuse Vanguard Project (RSVP) - connecting cities, solution providers, and civil society organisations through a coalition that can speak with a unified voice. The Prevention Pioneers Network has also created a foundation to drive further local action for the years to come, while pushing for frameworks to scale up successful reuse projects.
- We supported municipalities in 17 European countries, bringing zero waste models and impact to more than 14 million Europeans.

Key 2025 Numbers

Over **14 million**

Europeans benefited from the transition to zero waste through ZWE and MiZA's work



MEMBER STORY

How Zero Waste Belgium helped Brussels go reusable

Working alongside city authorities, [Zero Waste Belgium](#) supported the city of Brussels with the implementation of the "Brudalex 2.0" obligations, requiring 100% reusable cups, plates, and cutlery at all publicly funded events in Brussels. This is a significant step towards embedding reuse into the city's event culture and eliminating single-use plastics from public life.

Brussels is now going further by exploring an extension of the obligation to all events on its territory. Zero Waste Belgium is actively supporting this next step by advising on regulatory design, benchmarking best practices, and developing a calculator to help event organisers assess the waste reduction impact of going fully reusable.

By combining policy advocacy with on-the-ground support, Zero Waste Belgium shows us how civil society organisations can drive meaningful systemic change at the municipal level. This victory stands as a powerful example of what is possible when NGOs and city authorities work together towards a zero waste future.



"Biomonitoring studies conducted by ToxicoWatch in coordination with the Zero Waste Europe network has shown that the measured levels of POPs and heavy metals in moss, pine needles, and chicken eggs indicate a health risk to residents living near the cement plant in Turňa nad Bodvou in eastern Slovakia. When Friends of the Earth - SPZ, together with local organisation Green Element, revisited the topic of biomonitoring in early 2025, this time with the support of Zero Waste Europe, we received greater media interest, as well as from affected local governments and relevant state authorities.

It is essential to begin systematic surveys of the presence of toxic substances, such as POPs, in the vicinity of waste incinerators, cement plants, and heating plants, where the fuel mix is shifting towards the combustion of alternative fuels derived from waste. This investigation should include long-term monitoring of emissions directly from the chimneys of these facilities, as well as biomonitoring in their vicinity. People should be informed of the results of these measurements; they have the right to know what kind of environment they live in. The ultimate goal is to adopt fundamental decisions and measures to eliminate toxic pollution and improve the quality of the environment for residents."

MONIKA MEDOVIČOVÁ,
Friends of the Earth - SPZ (Slovakia)

OUR IMPACTFUL WORK

Implementing trusted solutions with local roots

- Zero Waste Cities: from projects to Certifications
- An ecosystem for prevention and reuse
- Championing the benefits of bio-waste
- The road to circular textiles



ZERO WASTE CITIES: FROM PROJECTS TO CERTIFICATIONS

In 2025, through ZWE's core implementation-based projects, the joint Certification efforts with our capacity-building spin-off Mission Zero Academy, and our network, we supported 35 municipalities across 17 countries, covering a total population of just under 14 million Europeans.

Our 2025 impact

- ✓ Launch of MiZA's Mission Makers video series, where Zero Waste Candidate and Certified Cities and Businesses tell the story of their zero waste journey and its benefits since joining the Certification programme.
- ✓ The Ribno Apine resort in Slovenia, mentored by ZWE member/MiZA mentor [Ekologi brez meja](#), achieved the highest possible score in the [Zero Waste Business Certification](#) during its re-certification.
- ✓ The Slovenian municipalities of Bled and Gorje got re-certified as Zero Waste Cities.
- ✓ CUIB Restaurant, Inframoura, the Central Bank of Montenegro, Funchal, Castelo Branco, Ourique, Alytus, Ormoz, Sredisce ob Dravi, and Sveti Tomaz, Caldas da Rainha, Vilablareix, and Velika Gorica became Zero Waste Candidate Businesses/Cities.

Key 2025 Publications

- ☰ The state of Zero Waste Municipalities - 5th edition ([report](#))
- ☰ How the carbon calculator translates zero waste strategies into climate benefits: the case of Barcelona ([case study](#))
- ☰ Krk's journey to zero waste ([case study](#))
- ☰ Mission Makers ([video series](#))
- ☰ Driving change with Ana Golja: how Ribno Alpine Resort became the first 3-star Zero Waste Certified Hotel in Europe ([blog post](#))



MEMBER STORY

How Zelena akcija helped Krk become Croatia's first zero waste island

Krk, a Croatian island welcoming over 900,000 tourists annually, faced a significant waste management challenge. But rather than being overwhelmed, it chose to innovate.

The journey began in 2005 with separate collection points across the island, followed by a door-to-door collection system in 2014 and a Pay-As-You-Throw scheme that linked household fees to actual residual waste generated. Working closely with [Zelena akcija](#) and ZWE, Krk developed an ambitious Zero Waste Plan involving all seven municipalities, tourist boards, schools, and local businesses.

The results speak for themselves: residual waste dropped by 58% between 2006 and 2019, and 70% of bio-waste is now separately collected. In October 2024, Krk became the first island in Croatia, and only the second in the world, to achieve full Zero Waste certification. Following the previous successful activities, in 2025, preparations began for initiatives aimed at reducing plastic waste at island events, as well as reducing food waste.

[READ THE CASE STUDY](#)



"Becoming the first in the world to achieve the 3-star Zero Waste Business Certification is an incredible honour for our team. It serves as a powerful validation of our commitment to the planet and proves that reaching the highest standards of sustainability is possible with dedication and the right expertise.

Our collaboration with the ZWE/MiZA network was the cornerstone of this success. Their guidance was more than just technical support; it was a roadmap that challenged us to think deeper and act bolder. The clarity and professional insight you provided during the certification process were invaluable. We feel immensely proud to lead the way globally, and we are grateful for a partnership that turns ambitious zero waste visions into a world-first reality."

KATARINA STRGAR
Ribno Alpine Resort (Slovenia)



Key 2025 Numbers

30 Zero Waste Candidate Cities

18 Zero Waste Certified Cities

4 Zero Waste Candidate Businesses

4 Zero Waste Certified Businesses



35 municipalities in 17 countries.

14 Million Europeans (approximately) supported by ZWE's implementation-based projects

AN ECOSYSTEM FOR PREVENTION AND REUSE



Zero Waste Europe has been championing reuse systems and the end of single-use plastic for most everyday items for years. In 2025, our work continued to bring together cities and businesses with the same vision for waste prevention and reuse as our network.

From expanding the networks of our reuse projects, to implementing changes that improve the daily lives of local citizens, our work continues to show that there is a growing desire for more waste prevention and reuse in towns and cities across Europe.

Key 2025 Publications

- RSVP – Blueprint for harmonising the implementation of takeaway food and drinks packaging systems for reuse in Europe ([blueprint](#))
- European Reuse Barometer – 2025 edition ([report](#))
- No more plastic? Here's how these Catalan cities are changing the game ([video](#))
- Ending the era of single-use ([manifesto](#))
- Parallel realities: managing plastic packaging waste in Bulgaria beyond official statistics ([report](#))
- The eco crèches project – Making the case for reusable nappies in Brussels ([factsheet](#))
- Fighting against marine pollution with local fishermen ([factsheet](#))
- Berlin's successful gamble: making reuse as easy as bottle returns ([blog post](#))



Our 2025 impact

- ✓ The expansion of our [ReuSe Vanguard Project \(RSVP\)](#) with the addition of Lisbon to the partner cities (through the efforts of our member Circular Economy Portugal) and the interest of several others (Manacor, Mechelen, Paris [La Defense], Brussels, Copenhagen, Nantes, and Lyon).
- ✓ Publication of the second edition of RSVP's Reuse Blueprint at the 2025 REuse Economy Expo, bringing together the learnings of the project to help implement reuse systems in Europe for takeaway food and drinks packaging.
- ✓ RSVP field trip to Berlin, where participants learned more about the Merhweg pilot on reusable packaging for takeaway drinks and drinks in cafes, restaurants, and supermarkets.
- ✓ The [Elevating Reuse in Cities \(ERIC\)](#) project's "Prevention Pioneers" meeting ahead of the Zero Waste Festival in Barcelona brought together more than 40 project partners to dive into the practical implementation of reuse. This included a field visit to Viladecan's reuse centre to learn more about the municipality's achievements under its Plastic Prevention Plan.
- ✓ The second phase of the ERIC project is now underway, with Plastic Prevention Plans advancing rapidly across 10 cities (Ljubljana, Cornellà de Llobregat, Viladecans, Torreles de Llobregat, Brussels, Funchal, São João da Madeira, Bordeaux, and the Nantes and Lyon metropolitan areas). A joint monitoring framework is currently being tested across local pilots, building the evidence base ERIC cities need to measure and demonstrate impact.



"At Circular Economy Portugal, we see the Reuse Blueprint as a powerful tool to move beyond single-use packaging. It has already helped us exchange knowledge with cities eager to implement reuse; and, as part of the Reuse Vanguard Project (RSVP), we are excited about the opportunities ahead to learn, share, and scale solutions that will make well-designed reuse the norm across Europe."

ANA ALMEIDA
Circular Economy Portugal (Portugal)



MEMBER STORY

Lyon, Bordeaux, and Nantes tackle single-use plastic items in their public procurement with the support of Zero Waste France

As part of the [ERIC project](#), Zero Waste France has successfully supported the metropolis of Lyon and Nantes as well as the city of Bordeaux with the drafting and implementation of Plastic Prevention Plans. Each city has developed its own approach to transform France's anti-waste legislation (Loi AGEC) into concrete local actions.

Working collectively on public procurement, the three cities have made measurable progress. For instance, Nantes created a clause library ("clausier") for buyers and technical departments, including around ten validated environmental clauses (with two explicitly targeting zero single-use plastic) covering priority purchase categories. Likewise, Lyon developed a practical guidance note on eliminating single-use plastic packaging from procurement, and early wins include the removal of disposable cups from coffee reception areas and the introduction of reusable dishware at the metropolitan restaurant.

The work of these three cities is gaining traction nationally. A webinar organised by the Grand Est Region attracted municipalities from across France and featured ERIC project presentations from Zero Waste France, progress updates from Lyon and Nantes, and a skills-sharing session for public procurement practitioners.

This is a strong example of what can be achieved by combining local ambition, expert support, and the right partnerships.

Key 2025 Numbers

8 European cities (8.3 million people) across **7 European countries** supported through the [RSVP project](#) on pilot programmes for takeaway packaging systems

29 municipalities (3.1 million people) across **10 European countries** supported the design of ambitious plastic prevention policies through the first phase of the ERIC project

10 municipalities (3.5 million people) across **5 European countries** benefited from increased support during the second phase of the ERIC project

20 "Métropole de Lyon Zero Plastic Pollution"-labelled events

82 registered stores focused on **reducing single-use packaging in Viladecans**

80 cafes and restaurants and 8 supermarket locations involved in the [RSVP Merweg pilot in Berlin](#)

84% of responding customers in the [RSVP Merweg pilot](#) said that returning cups via reverse vending machines increased their willingness to use reusable cups for takeaway drinks

CHAMPIONING THE BENEFITS OF BIO-WASTE

2025 was an important year for ZWE in our efforts to promote the capture and use of bio-waste as a major element of zero waste models and the circular economy.

The challenge ahead is clear: despite progress in recent years, only about 26% of all food waste generated in the EU is captured. This means that nearly 75% of all food waste is still ending up in landfills or incinerators.

Not only have our bio-waste funded projects contributed to mapping benefits and best practices in Europe, but our findings and impact have also been brought to global discussions (such as COP30) on how food waste prevention and the correct use of bio-waste will improve soil quality and mitigate climate change.



MEMBER STORY

ZERO builds the case for decentralised bio-waste management in Portugal

Bio-waste separate collection in Portugal is still at an early stage. During 2024 and 2025, ZERO worked to change that, creating technical and political space for high-efficiency solutions like door-to-door collection and decentralised composting.

A key moment was the organisation of study tours to the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Navarre, which put Portuguese municipalities and waste operators directly in touch with working, replicable composting systems. Seeing real results on the ground proved more persuasive than any theoretical argument.

In Portugal, ZERO supported municipalities, a school, and a campsite in implementing composting solutions, achieving nearly 8 tonnes of locally treated bio-waste at one tourism facility and around 47 kg of separately collected biowaste per inhabitant per year in a pilot municipality.

[READ THE FACTSHEET](#)

Key 2025 Numbers

10 municipalities benefited from the LIFE BIOBEST technical support services in 2024-25

62 Ukrainian municipalities completed training on developing bio-waste management plans

18 small to mid-sized European municipalities actively involved in the ForkToFarm project across 6 countries, covering a total population of:

500,000 Europeans and including:

- **8500 tonnes of organic waste** separately collected rather than landfilled, and sent instead for composting, anaerobic digestion or biogas production.
- Nearly **1000 tonnes of extra compost** produced.
- **22 new jobs created** for municipal and waste company staff to work on organic waste collection and treatment.
- **40% decrease in waste sent to landfill** in Partizanske (Slovakia) thanks to ForkToFarm's bio-waste separate collection efforts.
- **36.5 tonnes of food waste** was collected in the first 9 months of 2025 in Ulány nad Žitavou (Slovakia), leading to a 14% reduction in landfilled waste.
- **1027 tonnes of bio-waste** was separately collected in São João de Madeira (Portugal), from 19 tonnes in 2022.
- **300 households** used door-to-door organic waste collection in Tuzi (Montenegro), and a further 50 households started home composting.
- **100% of Montenegrin respondents** expressed willingness to continue composting and to recommend the practice to others during ZW Montenegro's community composting projects.
- **A 29% increase in separately collected organic waste** in Rydułtowy (Poland) during one year, from 72 kg per capita to 92.7 kg per capita - an extra 430 tonnes annually.
- **11 new circular jobs created** in Blagoevgrad (Bulgaria), with another 29 to be created in the coming years once the anaerobic digestion plant is fully operational.

Our 2025 impact

- ✓ Final stages of the LIFE BIOBEST project, including a comprehensive guide for effective bio-waste management in the EU that captures 2.5 years of project learnings.
- ✓ Research and data from the ForkToFarm project showcased the economic benefits of such initiatives - with one municipality involved in the project saving 800k EUR in one year - as well as the benefits for soil health and fertility through the application of compost generated by separately collected organic waste.
- ✓ We have validated our model of support and implementation for how to separately collect and treat bio-waste effectively, primarily across small- to medium-sized municipalities in diverse contexts (e.g. Portugal, Montenegro, Ukraine).



"ZWE's work is a key reference for us - almost like a bible for bio-waste recycling. ZWE's capacity for systematisation and analysis is essential in making information and critical knowledge accessible, allowing us to learn from the experiences of people and cities that have already gone through what we are facing now. This helps us avoid repeating the same mistakes and greatly accelerates implementation."

VICTOR ARGENTINO
Instituto Pólis (Brazil)

Key 2025 Publications

- ☰ LIFE BIOBEST comprehensive guidance for effective bio-waste management in the EU ([report](#))
- ☰ LIFE BIOBEST From waste to resource: 5 policy actions to transform bio-waste management in Europe ([video](#))
- ☰ Fighting climate change, one bio-waste bin at a time - how the ForkToFarm project supports Montenegro's environmental transition ([case study](#))
- ☰ ForkToFarm factsheets: 2 years of local action on bio-waste separation and composting ([factsheets](#))
- ☰ Mandatory yet makeshift: bio-waste management across the EU in 2025 ([blog post](#))
- ☰ Bridging EU bio-waste legislation and practical solutions for healthier soils ([blog post](#))



THE ROAD TO CIRCULAR TEXTILES

Europe (and the world) is waking up to the growing crisis of fast- and ultra-fast fashion. The fashion industry produces around 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually, with less than 1% of materials being recycled into new clothing.

With the average consumer buying 60% more clothing items than 15 years ago and keeping them for half as long, the environmental impact of textiles is now astronomical.

More and more organisations are urging brands and governing authorities to invest in ways to make textile production and consumption more sustainable, fair, and ethical for all. While the separate collection of textile waste became a requirement for EU Member States on 1 January 2025, the obligation to set up national EPR schemes will only come into force from 2027-28.

At ZWE, we're doing our part at the EU and local levels to align the way we produce and dispose of textiles with the circular economy.



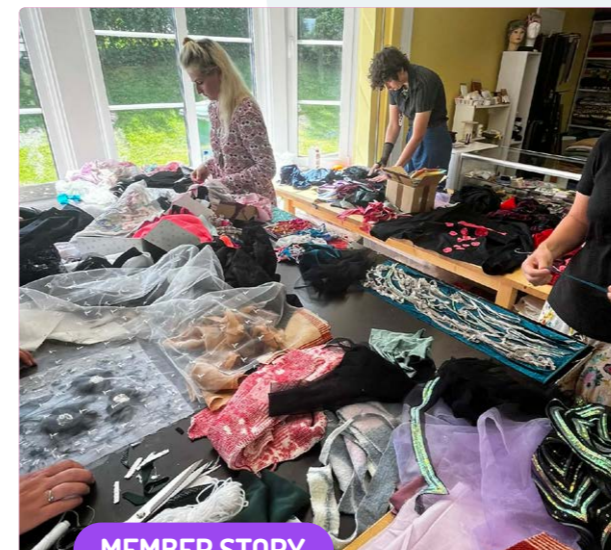
Key 2025 Numbers

An increase of **10,000 kg/month** of collected textiles in the city of Brussels between January and September 2025

An decrease of **2.5 kg of textiles** per person in 2025 in Bled (Slovenia)

Through the door-to-door separate collection of textiles pilot in Polva (Estonia):

3.6 extra tonnes of textiles collected
45% of the collected clothes were above the quality of the national average (30-35%)
€0.82 cost per kilogram collected



MEMBER STORY

Zero Waste Estonia brings textile repair and reuse to the city of Saku

Zero Waste Estonia (ZWEE) is pushing back against the textile industry's culture of overconsumption. Fast fashion has become one of the world's most polluting industries, producing between 100 and 150 billion garments annually, most of which are destined for landfill or incineration. Ultra-fast fashion brands now release up to 12,000 new items daily, taking a serious toll on people and the planet.

Through the STICT project, in collaboration with the city of Saku, ZWEE has brought practical, community-driven solutions to Estonia. Around 80 citizens attended repair and mending workshops, learning to extend the life of their clothes. Meanwhile, Ringlustuba, the Circulation Room, an open swap space in Saku, has already re-circulated 544 garments, completely free of charge.



Our 2025 impact

- ✓ Launched the ZWE-led Strengthening the Implementation of Circular Textiles Strategies in the EU (STICT) project, together with Ekologi brez meja, Zero Waste Belgium, Zero Waste Estonia, Fair Resource Foundation, and TEXroad. Funded by the Laudes Foundation, STICT helps prepare the ground for the obligation to set up mandatory EPR schemes for textiles in 2027-28 by connecting our EU policy, network, and local implementation/cities expertise, aligning all levels of governance with our zero waste vision on textiles.
- ✓ Within STICT, we support three municipalities in Slovenia, Estonia and Belgium, covering 208,000 Europeans, to implement ambitious textile waste collection and prevention policies.
- ✓ Participation in the United Nations International Day of Zero Waste, which in 2025 had textiles as a theme, through a dedicated communications campaign with our members, and through textiles-centric sessions during the 2025 Zero Waste Festival in Barcelona.



"Textiles are too valuable to waste. Our collaboration with Zero Waste Europe on the STICT project has given us a valuable opportunity to dive deeper into the challenge of textile waste — working closely with the Municipality of Bled to map local waste flows, try different measures, improve collection, and build greater awareness around reuse and sustainable textile management."

ŽAKLINA ŽNAJDER
Ekologi brez meja (Slovenia)

Key 2025 Publications

- Measuring up - first edition of ZWE's municipal manual for circular textile systems ([report](#))
- Transposing textiles EPR: the EU state of play in 2025 ([report](#))
- STICT - A new thread in Europe's journey towards circular textile systems ([blog post](#))
- NGOs call on EU Commission to support strong eco-modulation for textiles in French law ([joint letter](#))
- Three reasons why circular textiles can't work without data ([blog post](#))
- Tackling the textile crisis at the 2025 zero waste festival: from overproduction to circular solutions ([blog post](#))



OUR IMPACTFUL WORK

Moving up policies on the Waste Hierarchy

- Strategic Use of Materials
- Circular Economy Act
- Other relevant policy files

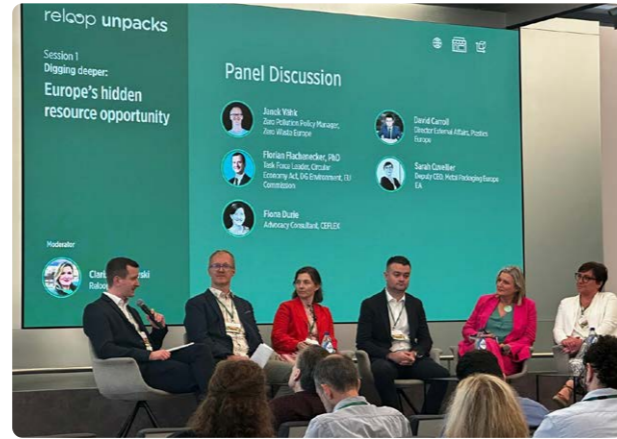


STRATEGIC USE OF MATERIALS

ZWE developed its Strategic Use of Materials concept throughout 2025. This points to the need to reduce overall material consumption (measured as the material footprint) to align with planetary boundaries while ensuring wellbeing for all.

More precisely, the strategic use of materials will reduce the dependency on imports of (critical) raw materials from unreliable supply chains. It will also strengthen European resilience and support the transition towards circular value chains, thus improving strategic autonomy and long-term competitiveness, while mitigating the costs of inaction and environmental damage for current and future generations.

Transitioning to a true circular economy favouring the upper tiers of the waste hierarchy can achieve this vision by introducing demand-side and upstream measures.



Our 2025 impact

- ✓ ZWE's Strategic Use of Materials narrative was picked up by policy-makers and partners (e.g. the Ellen MacArthur Foundation), which was a big step towards moving the topic away from the fringes and into a more mainstream/business audience.
- ✓ The Circular Economy Act public consultation included a question on financial incentives for primary materials, which aligns with the policy recommendations presented by ZWE at the start of 2025.
- ✓ Our publications showed that current circular policy measures are insufficient to reduce the absolute levels of resource use in the EU - a blind spot that threatens the EU's strategic autonomy and competitiveness. Crucially, ensuring that future generations can live well within planetary boundaries requires a fundamental shift in material use.

Key 2025 Numbers

43 ZWE press mentions on strategic use of materials

78% of which mentioned 'upstream/demand-side reduction measures'

CIRCULAR ECONOMY ACT

With the EU Circular Economy Act (CEA) being the big EU-level opportunity of this mandate, ZWE was among the first to publish a position on it and meet with policy-makers to discuss our ideas.

Our 2025 impact

- ✓ The European Commission's Circular Economy Act consultation incorporated our key recommendations, including tightening the exemptions to separate collections and introducing a legal obligation to use advanced sorting facilities for mixed municipal waste. This is a significant step forward in strengthening Europe's waste management framework.
- ✓ Thanks to our advocacy efforts, the Circular Economy Act consultation also proposes stronger enforcement of existing landfill measures (e.g. mandatory pre-treatment) and suggests new economic instruments, including landfill and incineration taxes.

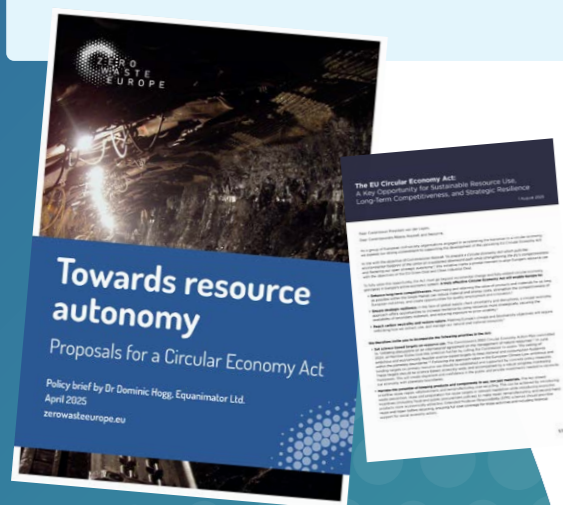


"Working with Aline [ZWE's Head of Policy] in advance of our meeting with Commissioner Roswall was particularly helpful. Not only did it give us a greater understanding of ZWE's excellent work in the area of the Circular Economy Act and Extended Producer Responsibility in general, but it also landed well with the Commissioner, who responded with some interest to the points and questions which we raised."

COLIN O'BYRNE
VOICE Ireland (Ireland)

Key 2025 Publications

- Towards resource autonomy: proposals for a Circular Economy Act ([report](#))
- The EU Circular Economy Act: a key opportunity for sustainable resource use, long-term competitiveness, and strategic resilience ([joint statement](#))
- Ecodesign preparatory study for product-specific measures on scarce, environmentally relevant and critical raw materials and on recycled content ([joint statement](#))



Key 2025 Publications

- Circular Economy Act policy recommendations ([position paper](#))
- Cap-and-trade on residuals: proposals for a Circular Economy Act ([report](#))
- Measures to minimise residual waste proposals for a Circular Economy Act ([study](#))
- Towards resource autonomy: proposals for a Circular Economy Act ([report](#))
- The EU Circular Economy Act: a key opportunity for sustainable resource use, long-term competitiveness, and strategic resilience ([joint statement](#))



OTHER RELEVANT POLICY FILES

2025 brought important legislative milestones across several key policy files. For instance, the EU Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) entered into force and the EU Waste Framework Directive (WFD) revision advanced through the EU institutions, both reflecting years of ZWE advocacy. Our efforts included influencing legislative outcomes, supporting members on the ground, and building the tools needed for effective implementation.

Key 2025 Publications

- Urgent call to advance the European Parliament's Plenary vote on the revised Waste Framework Directive ([joint letter](#))
- Scrutinising scientific standards - a scientific assessment of the JRC study on European sustainability criteria for plastics recycling technologies ([joint study](#))
- JRC recycled content calculation and verification rules on stakeholder workshop on 3/04/2025 ([joint position](#))
- Packaging & Packaging Waste Regulation implementation: a roadmap for national and local government ([joint guidance with the Rethink Plastic alliance](#))



Our 2025 impact

- ✓ The revision of the WFD contained some good provisions for textiles, including a revision clause to include targets for waste management and prevention.
- ✓ The revision of the WFD also included some of our amendments on food. While this legislation as a whole is not as ambitious as it could be, this still provides us with a good basis for national transposition and a review clause to increase the targets and expand the scope to primary production.
- ✓ The official PPWR adoption in February 2025 included the first recognition of reuse system and waste prevention measures through targets, proper safeguards on chemical recycling with requirements to define sustainability criteria, and border action to protect the recycling market with its mirroring clause. The PPWR will be fully applied from August 2026 onwards.
- ✓ Our work and advocacy efforts helped our members stop harmful chemical recycling projects in their countries, like Slovakia.

Key 2025 Numbers

38 stakeholders attended the workshop co-organised by ZWE, Deutsche Umwelthilfe, and New ERA on the implementation of the PPWR in November 2025



MEMBER STORY

Project collaboration for systemic Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) change shows parallel realities in Bulgaria's waste data

Za Zemiata and Zero Waste Europe published a [joint report](#) linking local data with European policy advocacy to expose structural weaknesses in Bulgaria's packaging waste system. Drawing on Za Zemiata's local expertise, the report shows that the current EPR model lacks oversight, transparency, and enforcement, shifting waste management costs to municipalities and citizens while collection systems remain underdeveloped. To address these issues, the report called for stronger regulation, greater data transparency, and EU-level oversight of producer responsibility schemes to support a truly circular economy.

[READ THE REPORT](#)



"We greatly value the advocacy work carried out by Zero Waste Europe. Their reports and case studies on recycling, waste prevention, reuse, economic instruments to reduce residual waste, and tackling chemical contamination in products are extremely useful resources for our work. We have been actively sharing these materials through our LinkedIn channels to help raise awareness in Poland – especially within the waste sector – about the practical solutions and policy tools needed to move towards a truly circular, zero waste economy."

JOANNA KADZIOLKA
Polish Zero Waste Association (Poland)



OUR IMPACTFUL WORK

Collective power: efforts with members and beyond

- ZWE's Network-Wide Gathering in Montenegro
- Coming together for an incinerator-free future
- More highlights from our network
- ZWE's coalitions and movements



ZWE'S NETWORK-WIDE GATHERING IN MONTENEGRO

In May 2025, over 60 passionate changemakers from our network and our team came together in Bar, Montenegro. Over three energising days, we shared ideas, celebrated our wins, and mapped out the next steps toward a fairer, zero waste future.

During the gathering, we had different areas for participants to come together and connect. For example, the Zero Waste fair gave members a platform to showcase victories, share visions and challenges, and discover new opportunities for collaboration. Over the three days, we held thematic sessions focused on pressing challenges such as:

- Making health central to zero waste (reuse, recycling and end-of-waste).
- From zero to hero – mapping the journey of a Zero Waste City and Business.
- Our common strategy to shape the future of EPR.

In April 2024, Montenegro took a step forward by passing a new Law on Waste Management, introducing two key measures: EPR and a ban on single-use plastics (SUP). These reforms mark a turning point in the country's journey towards sustainable resource management. During the Network-Wide Gathering, our hosts from Montenegro provided some examples of this change:

- Biljana Gligoric shared how the Central Bank of Montenegro is engaging with the Mission Zero Academy's Zero Waste Business Certification.
- Jelena Radulovic from the municipality of Kotor highlighted initiatives in high-quality composting, expanded waste collection services, and youth education in the city.
- Ruzica Brnovic (Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Development of North) delved into the country's evolving national policies, especially Montenegro's new waste management plan and the implementation of EPR.

Huge thanks to our hosts and member Zero Waste Montenegro, and to the welcoming people of Montenegro for their warmth and hospitality. This gathering was a true celebration of what we can accomplish when we come together.



MEMBER STORY

Building a Zero Waste Montenegro, one step at a time

In 2025, [Zero Waste Montenegro](#) delivered impact across multiple fronts.

Through the ForkToFarm project, the organisation expanded composting and organic waste collection across four municipalities (Tuzi, Danilovgrad, Kotor, and Podgorica) engaging over 700 households through home composting kits, door-to-door collection, community composting sites, and a public market pilot.

In the business sector, Zero Waste Montenegro mentored the Central Bank of Montenegro to become the first bank to achieve [Zero Waste Business Certification](#), embedding sustainable waste practices into its operations.

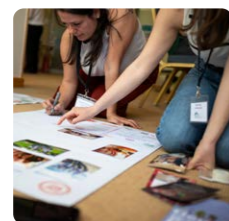
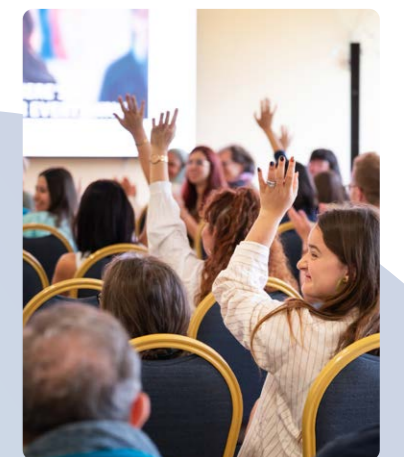
Internationally, Zero Waste Montenegro hosted the [Zero Waste Europe Network-Wide Gathering in Bar](#), welcoming over 60 participants from across Europe to align on priorities including EPR, reuse, and the network's new 2025-2030 Strategic Framework.



"Our experience in Montenegro shows that zero waste is never the work of one organisation. It grows through partnerships with communities, fellow organisations, municipalities and businesses.

Being part of the Zero Waste Europe network reminds us that local change is strongest when it is connected to a wider movement. Our progress is built on shared knowledge and solidarity across Europe and this collective power turns individual efforts into systemic change."

VANJA CICMIL
Zero Waste Montenegro (Montenegro)



COMING TOGETHER FOR AN INCINERATOR-FREE FUTURE

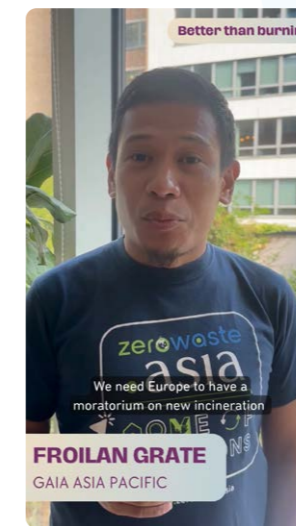
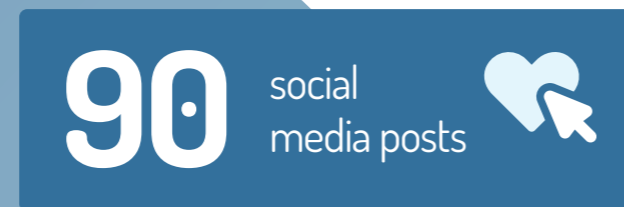
Across ZWE's network, members are united in their opposition to waste incineration, from local groups campaigning against new facilities in their communities to national organisations running dedicated anti-incineration campaigns.

What sets Zero Waste Europe apart in this fight is its ability to connect grassroots action with European policy. By combining research, community-level mobilisation, and EU advocacy, our network's opposition to incineration includes concrete legislative change, making the case that a zero waste future doesn't include burning our waste.

In 2025, this collective strength was most visible through the "Better than Burning" campaign, which brought together over 150 civil society organisations asking EU leaders for a moratorium on new incineration capacity and greater investment in circular economy solutions.



"Better Than Burning" Campaign in Numbers



MEMBER STORY

Fighting incineration across Europe

Across Europe, Zero Waste Europe members have been fighting to stop new incinerators, challenge planning decisions, and push governments towards genuinely circular solutions. 2025 brought significant wins and ongoing battles.

Slovakia: Friends of the Earth SPZ fought on two fronts. At Hontianske Tesáre, SPZ opposed a planned 100,000-tonne incinerator at a public EIA hearing. At Prakovce, collaboration with international partners, including Friends of the Earth Croatia and Break Free From Plastic, secured a mandatory full EIA, after which the operator withdrew entirely.

Bulgaria: Bulgaria's Supreme Administrative Court rejected a 400,000 tonne/year RDF incinerator planned for the Pavlikeni region, the culmination of four years of protests, petitions, and legal challenges supported by Zemiata. The earlier Sofia incinerator EIA overturn also held firm.

Latvia: Zero Waste Latvija continued opposing a €200 million Gren Latvija incinerator near Salaspils, raising health concerns around dioxin and mercury emissions and arguing for investment in recycling instead.

United Kingdom: UKWIN supported a parliamentary Ten Minute Rule Bill calling for a construction ban, an incineration tax, and an end to "deliver or pay" contracts that lock councils into supplying waste to incinerator operators. A long-sought goal also advanced: the UK government confirmed energy-from-waste will enter the UK Emissions Trading Scheme from 2028. UKWIN also published research revealing that more than two-thirds of English incinerators had never received an unannounced inspection, and continued supporting local campaign groups nationwide.



"Zero Waste Europe has been an instrumental force for our struggle against a waste incinerator in Ivory.

Thanks to Zero Waste Europe, we were able to finance a study by ToxicWatch that proved undeniably that there is no safe and non-toxic incineration, even with the most modern plants.

Thanks to this rigorous work, we were able to influence public opinion and be heard by our government officials.

We need Zero Waste Europe to counter the greenwashing lies told by the industrial waste incineration lobby."

AMÉLIE BOESPFLUG
Collectif 3R (France)

MORE HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR NETWORK

In 2025, ZWE welcomed two new Associate Members: e-Circular (Moldova) and Zero Waste Nederland (Netherlands).



E-CIRCULAR

Founded in 2010 and based in Chișinău, E-Circular is a leading organisation in the Republic of Moldova dedicated to advancing the circular economy and zero waste principles through education, consultancy, and public policy engagement.

Its mission is to transform how resources are used, shifting focus from waste generation to resource efficiency, reuse, and prevention.

E-Circular provides accredited training on environmental compliance, waste management, ESG reporting and circular business practices. It also plays a key role in shaping Moldova's waste management and EPR legislation, particularly in under-regulated sectors such as textiles and packaging. The organisation's work is grounded in the belief that circular practices must become part of daily life, driving tangible improvements for both people and the planet.

[LEARN MORE](#)



ZERO WASTE NEDERLAND

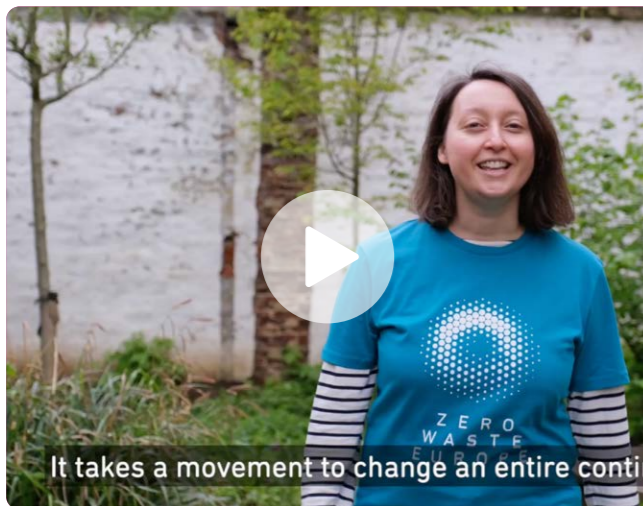
The Zero Waste Nederland Foundation stands for a world in which waste does not exist. Not by focusing on more cleaning up or more recycling, but by ensuring that it is not created in the first place.

With a focus on waste prevention, Zero Waste Nederland works on its mission by:

- Encouraging consumers to embrace the Zero Waste lifestyle;
- Encouraging businesses to come up with waste-free alternatives;
- Offering governments tools to encourage citizens to make more sustainable choices, and advising on legislation and regulations.

Zero Waste Nederland has 80,000 people connected through various channels, a national community and 76 local communities.

[LEARN MORE](#)



It takes a movement to change an entire continent.

"FROM THE GROUND UP: THE ZERO WASTE NETWORK" VIDEO

At ZWE, we witness people's power every day through our network of change-makers and community advocates. They challenge existing obsolete systems, bring new solutions to light, show how we can align social and environmental imperatives, and make local economies more resilient.

In 2025, we celebrated the power of our network through a dedicated video, showing how and why it takes a movement to change an entire continent (or even the world).

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

MEMBER STORIES

More zero waste achievements from our members



ITALY

Zero Waste Italy was featured in a Deutsche Welle video spotlighting Capannori, a Tuscan municipality that is a pioneer in waste reduction. In the video, Rossano Ercolini explains how the town was one of the first in the world to adopt a Zero Waste approach. Capannori has achieved exceptionally high recycling rates - including furniture, bikes, and clothing - offering a compelling model for communities across Europe.



LITHUANIA

The city of Alytus has committed to becoming a Zero Waste City, guided by the mentoring and expertise of Zero Waste Lithuania, a significant milestone for sustainable waste management in the country.



SWITZERLAND

In 2025, Zero Waste Switzerland celebrated ten years of driving waste reduction across the country, empowering communities, institutions, and businesses to rethink consumption and build a circular, waste-free Switzerland.

The Plate 12.3

Guidelines for less waste and more sustainable food in restaurants and pubs



SLOVENIA

Ekologi Brez Meja launched a practical guide to help restaurants and pubs reduce waste and adopt more sustainable food practices, offering actionable steps for the hospitality sector to minimise its environmental footprint.



ROMANIA

Zero Waste Romania has certified CUIB in Iași as the country's first Zero Waste restaurant through the Mission Zero Academy. The venue diverts 94.9% of its waste through composting, redistribution, and community partnerships, and has recovered over 100 tons of food. CUIB now serves as a model for sustainable hospitality across Romania.



GERMANY

In 2025, Zero Waste Kiel e.V. published a guide for organising zero waste festivals based on their experience with Kiel's Waterkant Festival. The guide outlines a five-step methodology covering waste separation, reusable materials, and sustainable catering, helping other event organisers reduce their environmental impact.

How Russian fuel feeds the world of plastic: a study of the correlation between fossil fuels and plastic



UKRAINE

Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine published a study that exposed the link between Russian fossil fuels and global plastic production, revealing how the plastics industry finances Russia's war machine.

ZWE's coalitions and movements



Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives (GAIA)



Break Free From Plastic



Rethink Plastic alliance



European Alliance for a Just Transition



Single-Use Material Decelerator group



Environment Coalition on Standards (ECOs)



European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform



FitNESS 2.0 (advisory board member)



Methane Matters Coalition



ECD-free Europe Coalition



Independent Science-Based Taxonomy Expert Group



International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN)



Flame Retardant Free Furniture

Prevent Waste Coalition for textiles

Prevent Waste Coalition for food waste

Resource Use Reduction Coalition

EU Bioenergy Coalition

Civil Society Taskforce for Resource Use Reduction

OUR IMPACTFUL WORK

Amplifying our voice and shaping the conversation

- Zero waste festivals and events
- Team and network ambassadorship
- ZWE in the media



Amplifying our voice and shaping the conversation

Zero waste festivals and events



2025 ZERO WASTE FESTIVAL

In 2025, we aligned the [Zero Waste Festival](#) in Barcelona with the UN International Day of Zero Waste, creating a powerful combination of global vision and local action.

Taking place during 26-27 March, the Festival celebrated ambitious zero waste thinkers and implementers, impactful practices, and lasting change. The group discussions, workshops, and panels over the two days covered the fundamentals of today's zero waste models, including reuse, textiles, toxic-free products, EPR, and zero waste cities.

Co-organised by [Rezero](#) and ZWE, the event gathered 372 participants from all over Europe and was one of the UN International Day of Zero Waste's [flagship events](#).



"By co-organising the Zero Waste Festival in Barcelona with Zero Waste Europe, we at Rezero managed to place the event in the European and even global agenda, thereby increasing its impact and helping advance zero waste at both a local and international level."

ROSA GARCIA
Rezero (Spain)



MEMBER STORY

The Zero Trace Festival: Cyprus gets its first zero waste event

In June 2025, [Zero Waste Alliance Cyprus](#) organised the Zero Trace Festival in Limassol, the first street festival in Cyprus structured around waste prevention rather than waste management. Instead of relying on recycling, the festival implemented reusable and returned cup and tray systems, on-site sorting infrastructure, water refill stations, and coordinated with vendors to eliminate single-use materials. This marked an important shift in how events can be imagined and implemented on the island.

The event was co-organised with the Garage Community space and local partners, showing how grassroots events can be redesigned to serve the community and the public space. More than just an event, the Zero Trace Festival demonstrated that a different approach to organising public gatherings is possible in Cyprus by minimising waste, involving the community, and inspiring others to rethink event planning and organisation practices.

Zero Waste Alliance Cyprus documented the entire experience in a detailed [case study](#) that covers both successes and challenges, so that other organisations and communities can learn from it and adapt it to their own local context.

[LEARN MORE](#)



IV ESTONIAN ZERO WASTE CONFERENCE

In October 2025, the [IV Estonian Zero Waste Conference](#) examined how [large-scale societal change happens](#) and the different elements of those changes. Co-organised by [Zero Waste Estonia](#) and ZWE, the event welcomed around 70 participants and looked at topics such as textiles, reuse systems, and behavioural change.

Team and network ambassadorship

2025 was the year we decided to really amplify the voices of the ZWE team.

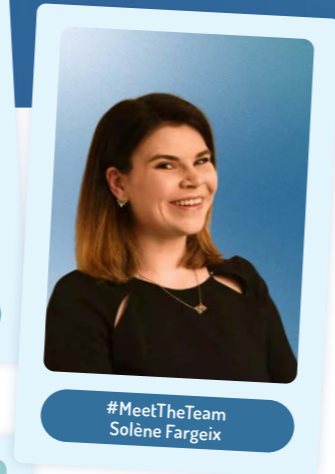
Our #MeetTheTeam series, which featured 6 staff members across the year, continued to give colleagues a platform to share their expertise and personal motivations, helping audiences connect with the humans behind our mission.

We also ran two capacity-building training sessions for staff and members: Bluesky Basics and Video Content Creation for Social Media. Both reflect an effort to increase our team's confidence in media communication, in order to better marry our storytelling and advocacy.

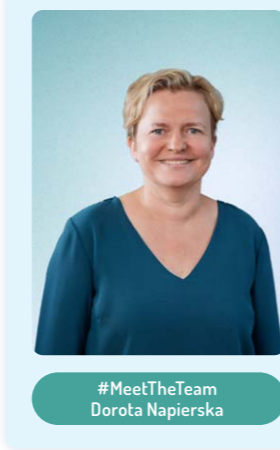
We also invested in how our team shows up in person. Staff took part in a public speaking course with Anna Gumbau and Moderating EU, which helped us communicate with greater confidence and presence. The improvement of these skills were quickly visible in our communications. In 2025, we produced 30 short-form videos for social media (e.g. Instagram and LinkedIn), with staff, members, and event participants going in front of the camera to break down complex topics, react to news, and show the human side of our work. Our short-form videos have now become a natural part of how our team explains and promotes our advocacy and impact.



#MeetTheTeam
Joan Marc Simon



#MeetTheTeam
Solène Fargeix



#MeetTheTeam
Dorota Napierska



#MeetTheTeam
Anna Garstka



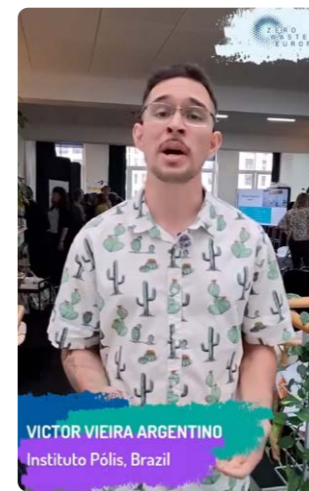
#MeetTheTeam
Giulia Lodi



#MeetTheTeam
Nathan Dufour



BETTY OSEI BONSU ADJEI
Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO)



VICTOR VIEIRA ARGENTINO
Instituto Pólis, Brazil



SOFIA SYDORENKO
Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine



Anastasiia Martynenko -
Zero Waste Alliance Ukraine



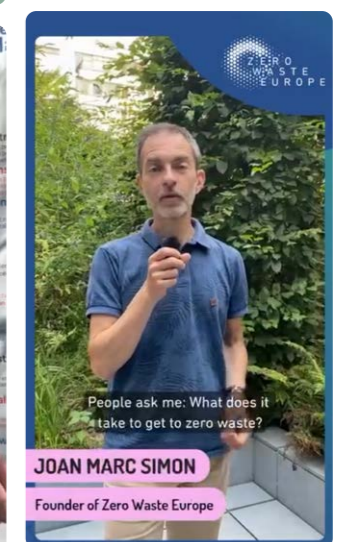
and recycling of waste here in Catalonia.



MARISA NORDSTROM
The UMI Fund



We want more finance for textile waste



JOAN MARC SIMON
Founder of Zero Waste Europe

ZWE in the media

2025 media work in numbers

1,227

press mentions
for 2025



17 Bespoke interviews



4 Editorials



2 participations in podcast episodes

81

countries covered

At least

1,810,549,432

readers/viewers/listeners reached

Main Topics Covered



Plastics (reuse, prevention, recycling, Global Plastics Treaty)



Food waste



Waste Framework Directive



EU Bioeconomy Strategy



EU environmental omnibus



Alternatives to incineration

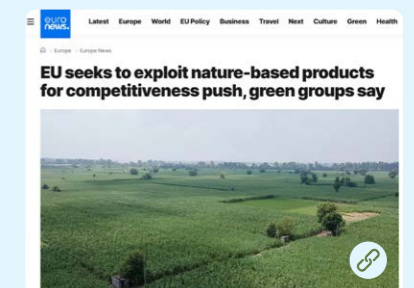
Press Clippings Highlights



Claims that RDF can reduce emissions are strongly questioned by critics and dubbed 'creative accounting' by Janek Vahk, the Zero Pollution Policy Manager at Zero Waste Europe. 'The problem... is that there are very few studies looking at the actual emissions,' he says.



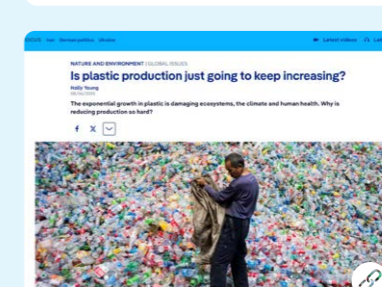
El vidrio puede reutilizarse entre 15 y 50 veces, según diversos estudios, y cada retorno reduce sustancialmente el impacto ambiental. Un análisis de Zero Waste Europe y ReLoop asegura que una botella reutilizada genera un ahorro de emisiones de hasta un 85% respecto a otra de un solo uso.



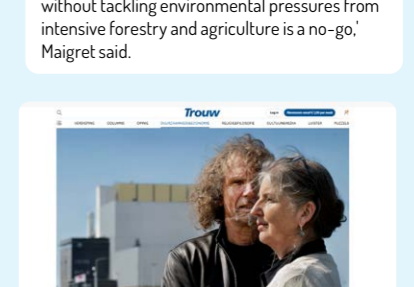
Aline Maigret, Head of Policy at the environmental NGO Zero Waste Europe, welcomed the "ambitious goals" set out in the bioeconomy strategy, but drew a red line. 'Achieving a circular bioeconomy requires careful design within planetary boundaries. For example, promoting bio-based packaging without tackling environmental pressures from intensive forestry and agriculture is a no-go,' Maigret said.



Outre l'incinération, l'industrie soutient également qu'une restriction universelle pourrait être évitée en misant sur la gestion des déchets de PFAS pour réduire la pollution. Cependant, un projet européen de biosurveillance coordonné par l'ONG Zero Waste Europe et mené près d'incinérateurs en Lituanie, en Espagne et en République tchèque, a révélé "d'importantes quantités de PFAS... dans la mousse, les aiguilles de pin et les œufs de poules élevées en plein air"; ces substances très mobiles ne se cantonnent pas à leur environnement industriel.



"The only place where capacity is going down slightly is in the European Union," said Joan Marc Simon, founder of Zero Waste Europe, a network dedicated to reducing plastic waste. "The rest of the world is increasing." However, Simon added that the high production costs have led to producers either manufacturing outside Europe or importing plastics from elsewhere. 'We know for sure that all main producers are increase capacity: US, China, South Africa, Brazil, Iran, Saudi Arabia.'



Anders dan veel industriële fabrieken worden afvalverbrandingsinstallaties vaak in of nabij woonwijken gebouwd, zegt Janek Vahk van Zero Waste Europe. "Soms verontrustend dicht bij woningen, kantoren en scholen. Dit leidt tot ernstige zorgen over de langdurige blootstelling aan vervuiling en de gevolgen voor de gezondheid."

Securing organisational stability and resilience

ZWE as a thriving, and resilient organisation

We successfully navigated a challenging year through team-wide commitment, strong fundraising efforts, smart budget management, and preparing the groundwork for funding diversification (exploring a new economic model for future stability). This collective effort has set a strong foundation for the years ahead.

Zero Waste Europe remained stable in 2025. Counting 21.5 FTEs in the core team, we welcomed three new team members! With a 4.3/5 average score on the 2025 engagement survey, engagement remained stable compared to last year. Our employees' development was strengthened with learning and development opportunities taken up more proactively by team members, onboarding processes revised, enablement reinforced with quizzes, skillshares on finance processes and workload management, and with the set up of a tools strategy. A strong follow up was done on prevention and wellbeing initiatives and compliance, as well as on IT security.

Following the approval of our 2025-2030 Strategic Framework by our members, we launched our risk assessment and our impact monitoring framework, with an initial focus on impact measurement, we (re)defined our KPIs and developed our dashboards.

With regards to governance, our Board was strengthened with the reelection of two Board Members. Since its new set up in 2023, the Board has followed a clear consolidation process with roles and responsibilities aligned to their skills. A yearly face-to-face meeting is also organised to discuss the annual workplan, align on emerging strategic discussions, update the Board role division, and to reconnect. Overall, our Board remains close to our Executive Director, Management team and overall Membership, whilst having the opportunity to attend the ZWE team's planning meeting each year to understand the wider team's needs and plans.



Our 2025 impact

- ✓ **Ensuring our financial health:** the team united to reduce unnecessary spending and secure funding for the coming years. Our team members active in fundraising attended more networking events, we renewed 8 out of 9 grants, and were engaged in 18 meetings with funders throughout the year.
- ✓ **High staff engagement and a strong sense of ownership:** our staff engagement score has increased over the last five years (from 3.9 to 4.3 out of 5), showcasing ZWE's strength on people and culture. At the same time, team members also feel more at ease acting as ZWE ambassadors (average score of 4.44 out of 5), especially on their own topic, and they are excited to get even better at pitching the work of their colleagues.
- ✓ **Providing continuous support to enable our hosted organisations** (Break Free From Plastic - European Chapter, and Mission Zero Academy) to thrive and focus on their impact activities.

Last but not least, in September 2025, our team got together for its annual Team Retreat during which we held in-depth sessions on impact monitoring, our principles for working with members, environmental justice principles application in our work, and revising our annual cycle and team meeting habits.

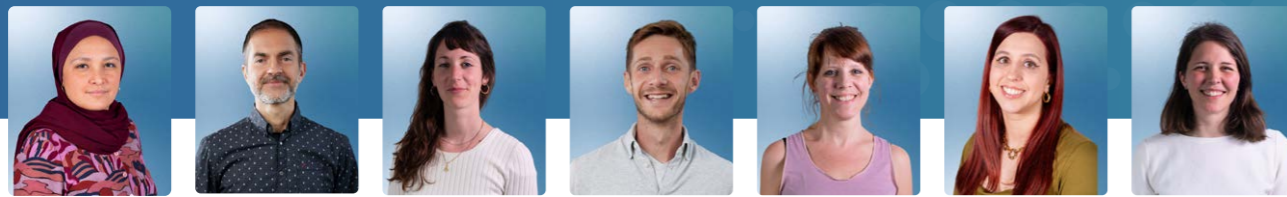
[READ MORE IN "TALKS FROM THE HEART- HOW TO KEEP ENGAGED IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY?"](#)

“Zero Waste Europe is a great convener and facilitates very practical skills sharing sessions led by members on organisational development topics, like diversifying funding streams. It's great because we are able to brainstorm as a group and share ideas, so we can each take something new back to our home countries that helps us to do our work better.”

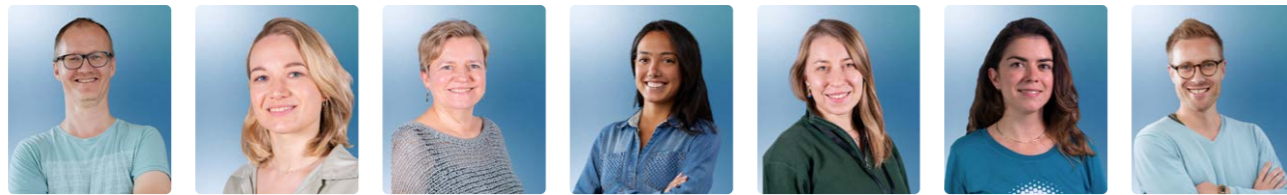
BETH FITENI
Friends of the Earth Malta (Malta)

The people behind it all

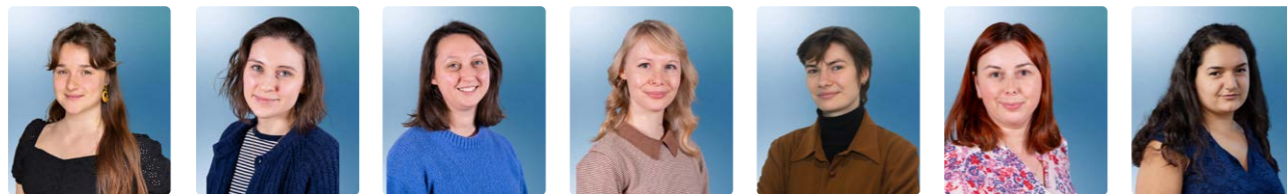
Zero Waste Europe staff



Esra Tat Executive Director
Joan Marc Simon Founder
Aline Maigret Head of Policy
Jack McQuibban Head of Local Zero Waste Implementation
Stephanie Yates Head of Network & Movement Building
Ana Oliveira Head of Communications
Alice Marquet Head of Operations



Janek Vähk Zero Pollution Policy Manager
Theresa Mörsen Waste & Resources Policy Manager
Dorota Napierska Toxic-Free Circular Economy Policy Officer
Larissa Copello Packaging & Reuse Policy Officer
Lauriane Veillard Chemical Recycling & Plastic-to-Fuels Policy Officer
Manon Jourdan Waste Prevention Manager
Nathan Dufour Reuse Systems Manager, Leader of the ReuSe Vanguard Project (RSVP)

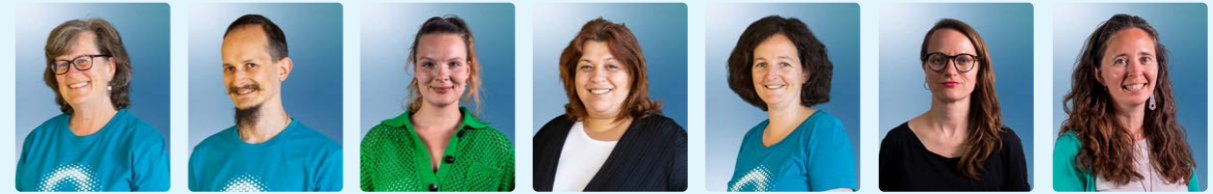


Andrea Veselá Textiles Officer
Ariane Osman Communications Officer
Giulia Lodi Communications & Network Officer
Nanna Cornelsen Communications Officer
Anna Garstka Human Resources Officer
Alexandra Clipa Operations and Events Officer
Desi Borisova Finance Officer



Kaisa Karjalainen Director of the Mission Zero Academy
Solène Fargeix Business Development Manager of the Mission Zero Academy

Zero Waste Europe Board



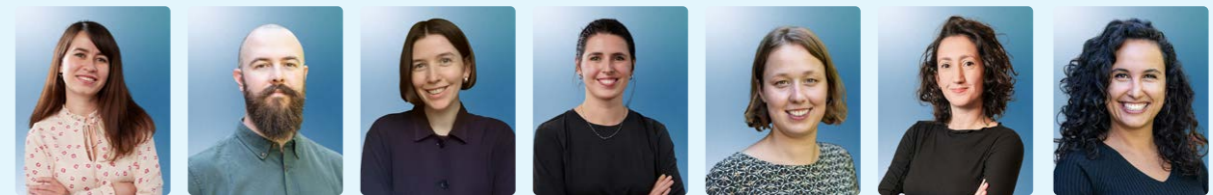
Mindy O'Brien President
Jaka Kranjc Treasurer
Janine Röling Secretary
Antigone Dalamaga Board Member
Juliette Franquet Board Member
Maija Krastiņa Board Member
Nathalie Cadot Board Member

Zero Waste Europe Scientific Committee



Enzo Favoino
Chair of the Scientific Committee

Our hosted coalition and alliances



Iveta Cadrova Break Free From Plastic European Coordinator
Alexander Colling Senior Manager, People & Operations for Break Free From Plastic Europe
Rose Ní Chléirigh Policy Coordinator for the Rethink Plastic alliance & the Break Free From Plastic Europe movement
Bethany Spendlove Keeley Europe Communications Officer for Break Free From Plastic
Caroline Will Communications Coordinator of the Rethink Plastic alliance
Lara Grosso Sategna Movement Associate for Break Free From Plastic Europe
Laura Diaz Sanchez Campaign Building Coordinator for Break Free From Plastic Europe

Colleagues who left the team in 2025-26



Justine Maillot **Sacha Mevel** **Seán Flynn**



Finances and Funding



Our funders in 2025

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| EU Grant: EASME EU LIFE Operating Grant | Laudes Foundation |
| EU Grant: LIFE BIOBEST Project Grant | MAVA, Fondation pour la nature |
| EU Grant: LIFE Zero Waste Cities in Ukraine | OAK Foundation |
| EU Grant: LIFE4EPR project grant | Plastic Solutions Fund |
| EU Grant: SMP – Nudge Against Food Waste | Sigrid Rausing Trust |
| Adessium Foundation | UMI |
| European Climate Foundation | 11h Hour/Schmidt Foundation |
| GAIA | Donations |
| GMH – DUH | Membership Fees |
| Kristian Gerhard Jebsen Foundation | |

Our finances*

Zero Waste Europe expenditures in 2025	
	KEUR
Salaries	€1,684
Direct costs	€395
Overheads (Incl. VAT reimb and exchange rates)	€266
Total in house ZWE	€2,345
Subgranting	€795
ZWE Core spending	€3,140
Hosted coalitions and movements	€1,319
Total Zero Waste Europe expenditures	€4,459
Reserves	€111

Zero Waste Europe Income in 2025	
	KEUR
Philanthropic funding	€3,835
European Commission	€638
Membership fees	€14
Speakers and expert fees	€14
Donations	€2
Hosting fees (MiZA)	€24
Consulting fees (MiZA)	€23
Other income	€20
TOTAL	€4,570

*pending official audit confirmation

Thank you to...

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| ACR+ | Inédit |
| Akmaz BVBA | KOIS |
| An de Smet/SBB Accountants & Adviseurs | Marc Peczenik/Softcom |
| Aniek/Heerlijckyt van Elsmeren | Marta Amat |
| Anja Van Eeckhout/Coach Partners | NewERA |
| Anna Gumbau/Moderating EU | Noble Studio |
| AWE Studio | Noiza |
| Andrew Rollinson/Blushful Earth | Ôko-Institut |
| Blush Design Agency | Okay When |
| Camille Delbos | Radonja Srdanovic |
| Cédric Sounard/Commons Hub | Reloop |
| Clybouw Accountants & Bedrijfsrevisoren | Reseau Vrac et Reemploi |
| Dalberg Management | Robbe Seurync/SalesBridge |
| Dominic Hogg/Equanimator Ltd | RREUSE |
| Economia Research & Consulting | Plan2U |
| Elza Low | Philip Tregunna |
| Food Packaging Forum | Pinsent Masons |
| Grainne Murphy | Simon Sharp/Sharp Design |
| GRC Global Research and Consulting | The Hum |
| Javier Bernal Revert | Tim Clynen |
| Julien Lesuisse/Netika IT | ToxicoWatch |
| LittleBox (Romain Triollet and Gamaal El Attar) | Topos/Eleni Tolkoutsis |
| Ljubica Dragas/Hotel Princess Bar | White & Case |
| Mate Tagaj/Boostern | Zacharias Garcia |
| Mike Walker | |

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

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

Our supportive Donors.

Our critical Funders.

Our fantastic Members.





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Ariane Osman, Communications Officer
Design: Blush Design Agency
Date: April 2026

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