



WES-BCA Regional Activity C1_REG-1

Regional Webinar on Strengthening Regulatory Frameworks for Plastic Pollution and Circular Economy Alignment

22 July 2026

09:00 - 14:00 CET online



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Session N° 2

Emerging regulatory developments and key building blocks relevant for national legislation

Presented by:

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Presenter & aim



Presenter dr. Wybe Th. Douma

- Founder of European Environmental Law (EEL) Consultancy
- [‘Make it work’](#) project (NL, UK, SE, CZ) aimed at:
 - drafting principles for simpler, future-proof rules &
 - more effective implementation of these rules
- [Comparative legal study on circular economy](#) (FR, DE, DK, B, ES)
- Approximation projects



Aim of presentation

Setting out emerging regulatory developments & key building blocks, notably from the European Union, relevant for national legislation aimed at preventing plastic pollution and stimulating transition to a more circular economy.

Regulatory developments

Past focus:

- **pollution reduction**
- **linear** economy: “**take-make-dispose**”
- **extract** finite materials -> **make** products -> **dispose** after use

Emerging focus:

- **Transition** from **linear** to more **circular** economy
- **closed-loop** system: keep materials in continuous use through sharing, repair, reuse and recycling
- moving beyond pollution reduction -> **systemic changes** in **production, consumption** and **lifestyles**
- encourage **innovation** for sustainability, remove barriers

Linear v. Circular Economy

	<i>Linear Economy</i>	<i>Circular Economy</i>
Model	Take - Make - Dispose	Make - Use - Return
Resource flow	Open-ended loop; depleting raw materials	Closed loop; reuse existing materials & reduce extraction -> resource efficiency
Waste Management	Waste = endpoint (landfill or incinerate)	Waste to be avoided. Prevent, recycle, re-use
Design	Planned obsolescence to drive frequent replacement purchases	Products designed for durability, modularity and easy repair

Reasons for transition:

- Resource scarcity
- Prevent emissions & pollution to protect humans and environment
- Independency (less need for imports)

Transition challenges

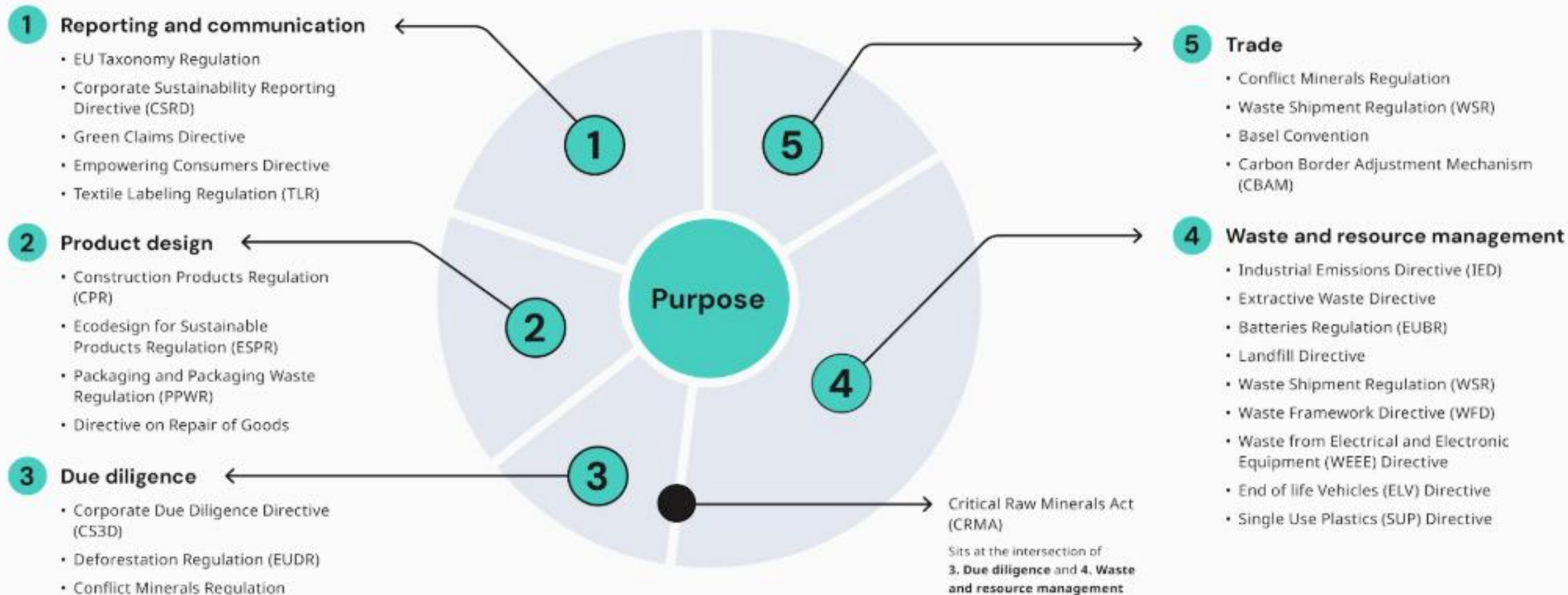
- **Existing economic systems & interests**
 - **virgin** plastic cheaper than collected, sorted and recycled plastic;
 - shifting business models (ex. products as service) requiring **high investments**
 - environmental **externalities** not paid for by producer
 - government **subsidies**
- **Technical complexities**
 - Great variety of products
 - Complex design (ex. exceptions to duty to replace batteries in electronics)
- **Policy & regulatory restraints**
 - Often aimed at linear economy
 - Barriers: ex. public health regulation standing in way of circular solutions
- **Consumer behaviours**
 - Limited resources = go for cheaper, linear product

Example EU

Need for transition to circular economy was recognised early on in EU:

- [First Circular Economy Action Plan](#) (2015) - incl. legislative proposals
- [European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy](#) (2018)
- Circular economy legislative package adopted (2018)
 - ➔ Waste framework directive, WFD (introducing Extended Producer Responsibility Scheme)
 - ➔ Landfill
 - ➔ Packaging and packaging waste (PPWD)
 - ➔ Batteries
 - ➔ Waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE)
- Directive on single-use plastics (2019)
 - ➔ 10 MSS meet 77% **separate collection** rates plastic bottles in 2022, 7 yrs early
 - ➔ Successes linked to having **Deposit and Return System (DRS)** in place (2026 evaluation)

Overview of EU circular economy legislation



Source: Circle Economy, [A complete guide to circular economy policies targeting EU businesses in 2026](#)

Latest EU developments

- **‘Winter package’ to accelerate transition, focus on plastics (2025)**
 - Reason: crises in EU plastics recycling market (plant closures, high energy costs)
 - Short-term actions to protect EU industry against cheap virgin plastic
 - Implementing act to create EU-wide end-of-waste criteria for plastics under EU WFD, cut red tape for recyclers, ensure stable supply of recyclates
- Future **EU Circular Economy Act** proposal to be presented late 2026.
 - horizontal measures that will improve the functioning of the EU’s Single Market for secondary raw materials.
- The **Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD)** overhauled by **Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation 2025/40 (PPWR)**.
 - Application as of 12 August 2026
 - Recycling objectives reinforced
 - Minimum rate of recycled material in plastics packaging (30% rate in PET packaging by 2028)

Key building blocks national regulation

- Alignment with regional initiatives & best practices
- Taking note of UN Plastics Treaty negotiations
- Regional cooperation, notably to stimulate regional markets
- Use of science and Life Cycle Assessments as basis for policy and action
- Transparent processes of stakeholders' participation
- Protecting general interest (consumer health, environment)
- Smart regulation -> measurable, proportionate, easy to apply and enforce
- Avoiding 'plastics fatigue'
- Fit for purpose regulation -> avoids burdening producers and administration
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) & Deposit and Return Systems (DRS)
- Evaluate previous actions



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Thank you for your attention!



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**Thank you for your attention
and keep up with our latest news!**

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