

Circular Economy Act must not become a Recycling Act, RREUSE warns

Brussels, 30 April 2026 – On the occasion of the European Commission’s final stakeholder workshop on the Circular Economy Act, RREUSE is raising serious concern that the Commission is overlooking the very measures that make an economy actually circular: waste prevention, reuse, and preparing for reuse.

Rather than focus on the highest levels of the waste hierarchy, the CEA's approach places primary emphasis on waste management, recycling, and secondary raw materials. This risks turning the CEA into a Recycling Act instead of a genuine framework for circularity.

“The cornerstones of an actual circular economy are laid well before products become waste: with making sure that products last longer, making repair and reuse easy, and ensuring that social circular enterprises can scale their work across Europe,” said Neva Nahtigal, RREUSE Director. *“If the Circular Economy Act does not put waste prevention, reuse and preparing for reuse at its centre, it will miss its greatest economic, environmental, and social potential.”*

RREUSE also notes with concern the very limited representation of civil society organisations in the high-level dialogue with Commissioners. An initiative of this scale must be shaped not only by industrial actors but also by organisations that prioritise the planet and its people, including those that are already delivering reuse, repair, social inclusion, and local circular jobs on the ground.

A call to raise ambition

RREUSE calls for the Circular Economy Act to embed waste prevention as an overarching ambition and support social enterprises’ reuse activities. To do so, the CEA should introduce the following priority measures:

- Ensure the **full cost coverage** of social enterprise activities through EPR schemes
- Mandate **inclusive governance** of EPR schemes
- Set mandatory and separate **preparing-for-reuse targets**

RREUSE urges the Commission to build on the more ambitious positions already emerging from co-legislators. The Council of the European Union has recognised the need to unlock the full potential of waste reduction and reduce material extraction by incentivising durability, reparability, reuse, servitisation and circular business models, and has encouraged the Commission to reflect this in the Circular Economy Act.¹

¹ Council of the EU (2025) Europe’s Environment 2030 - Building a more climate resilient and circular Europe - Council conclusions (Available [here](#)).

In the European Parliament, the Greens/EFA have called for the CEA to reduce Europe’s resource use and environmental footprint so that the EU stays within planetary boundaries, while also proposing that Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) finance prevention, reuse and repair.² The S&D Group has similarly stressed that a comprehensive Circular Economy Act should use EPR schemes to prioritise waste prevention and fully fund reuse activities in line with the EU waste hierarchy.

Neva Nahtigal said: *“We stand ready to work with the Commission, Parliament, and Council to ensure the final proposal supports a Single Market driven by genuine circularity, one that keeps products and materials in use for as long as possible, reduces Europe’s dependency on virgin resources, and strengthens local social circular enterprises across the EU.”*

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² Greens/EFA (2025) Policy inputs for the upcoming Circular Economy Act (Available [here](#)).