

CIRCULAR



Circular Cities in Action: AI-Powered Tools for Circular Transition at Scale

2 July 2026 | Brussels

Event facilitated by



Procurers



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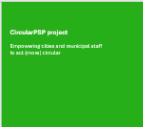
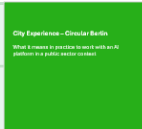
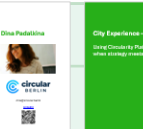
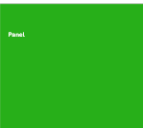
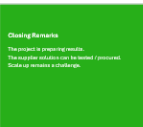
CircularAI



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe under Grant Agreement n° 101092208.

Agenda

Present: help yourself to coffee/water anytime and raise hands --- **Online:** use Q&A feature for questions and chat to interact

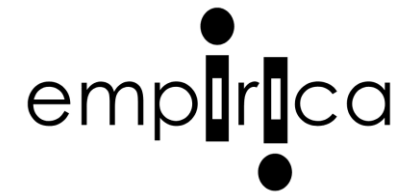
09:00 – 09:10		Welcome and opening remarks – Georg Vogt – CircularPSP Coordinator, empirica			
09:10 – 09:50	CircOS & CircularAI: evidence, value, road to scale	CircOS – Kim Turk Mehes – CircOS Deployment Lead, VCG.AI GmbH			
		CircularAI – Vitória Fank Spohr – CircularAI, INNCISO Innovation SL			
09:50 – 10:20	City testimonials — Two pilot use cases	Dina Padalkina – Circular Berlin			
		Francisco Ferreira – City of Guimarães			
10:30 – 10:45	EU Agenda for Cities supporting circular transformation	Pia Laurila – Team Leader – Cities, European Commission, DG REGIO – Unit Cities, Communities, People			
10:45 – 11:45		Routes to adoption — roundtable discussion — Moderator: Draško Veselinović			
Participants: Pia Laurila, Chiara Venturini, Helena O'Rourke-Potocki, Dina Padalkina, Francisco Ferreira					
11:45 – 12:00 Reactions					
12:00 – 12:10		Closing remarks – Georg Vogt – CircularPSP Coordinator, empirica			
12:10	Informal lunch and live platform demonstrations				



CircularPSP project

Empowering cities and municipal staff
to act (more) circular

Georg Vogt



Georg.Vogt@empirica.com

[LinkedIn](#)



Observations on Circular Economy (CE)

Circular economy is stalling, systemically complex and needs to be implemented on local level

CE Progress is slow

City strategy is complex

Individual action is complex

How does this feel?

Great public potential

- **EU: €2 trillion yearly in public procurement (14% of GDP)³**
- **250,000 public organisations³**

Thousands of cities need to act locally

- **85% share of GDP in urban areas⁵**
- **Cities account for 75% resource consumption⁶**

Many need to be involved

- **75 million employees⁹**
- **221+ definitions of CE¹⁰ and more indicators¹¹**

Targets

**CITY
STAFF**



Regulation

Indicators

(Self)Doubt

Life-time costs

Failed procurement

No template, new criteria

Regulation?

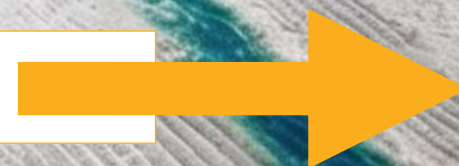
Support of superior?

More sector-specific circular alternatives



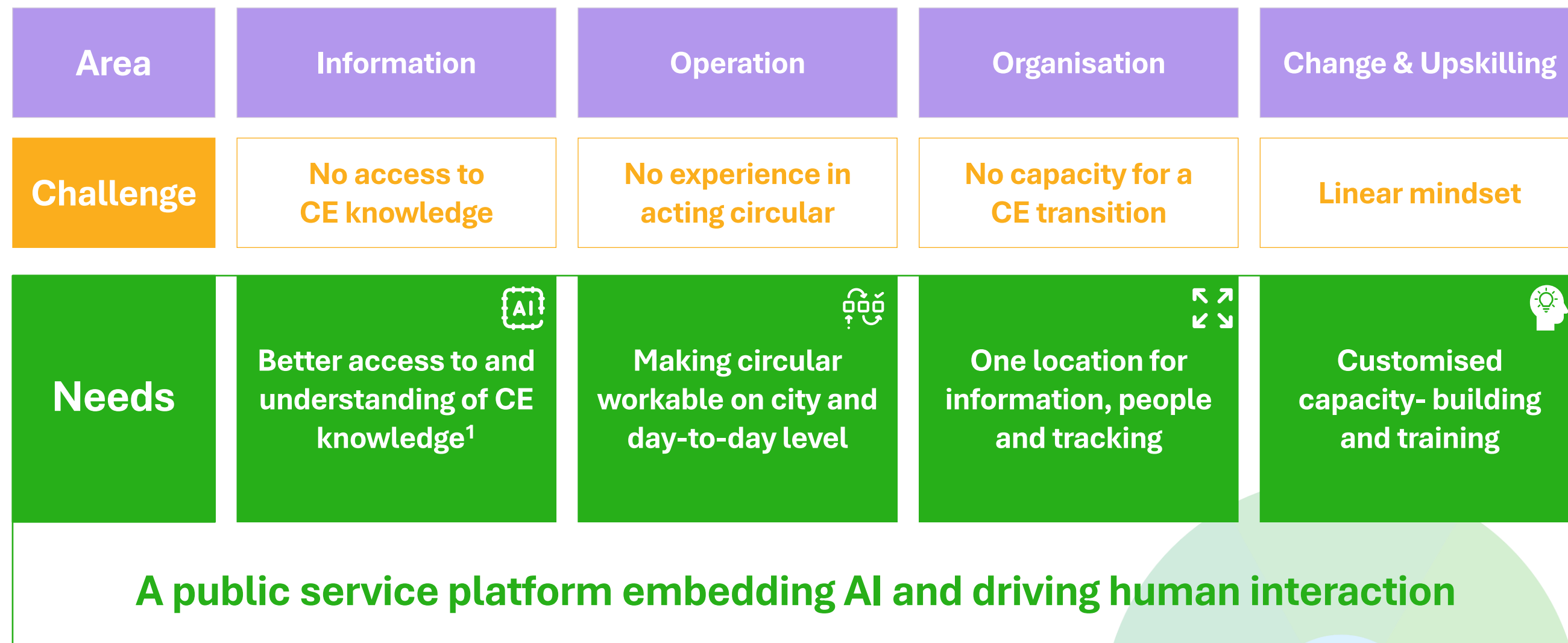
For each use case, a person starts from scratch

Easy and safe bet: repeat linear



Framework for tackling challenges

CircularPSP addressed four critical challenge areas based on extensive research





Localised ideation

Step-by-step instructions

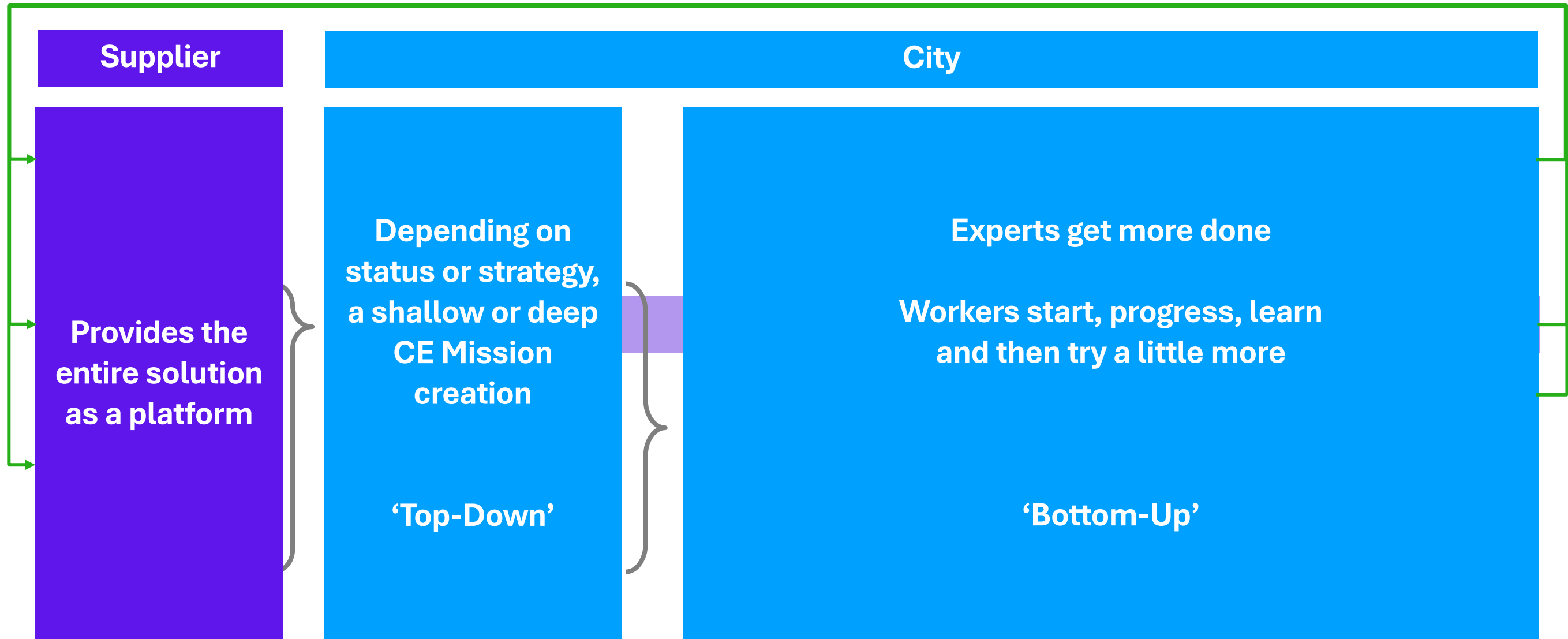
Support structure / network

Training and Nudging



Outline of solution & service

Platform, the user base and onboarding process can be tailored to organisational needs – content is local by design



Innovation Funnel to Public Service Platform

Selection, focus and lots of agile iteration based on learning

Challenge Definition
+
Feasible Approach

Market competition

Selection
Iteration

Selection
Testing +
Iteration
*X

Selection
Real-life-
Testing
+ Iteration
+ Iteration
+ Iteration

CircularAI

CircOS

Tender with AI Act clauses
received

Phase I with 5 Suppliers
10 Followers incl. ministries

Phase II with 3 Suppliers
10 Followers incl. ministries

Phase III with 2 Suppliers
100 Followers

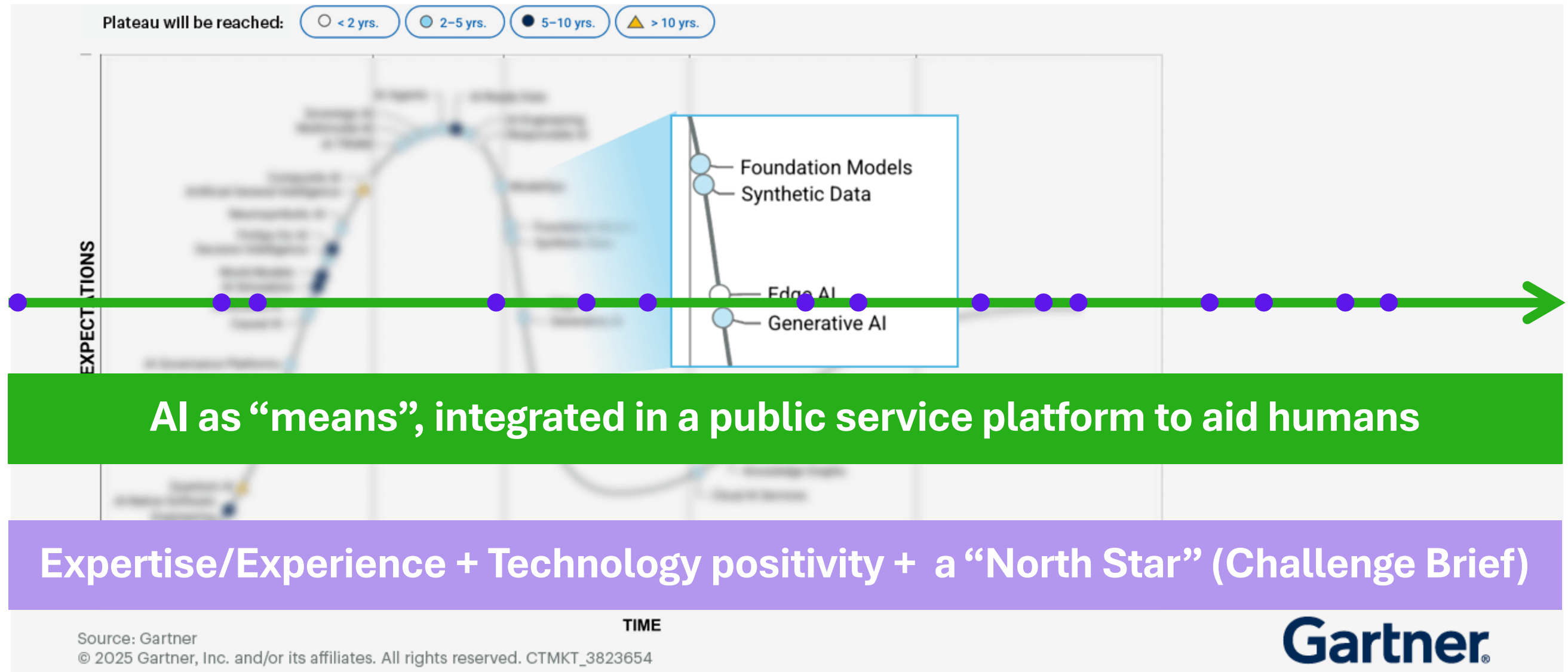
Real-life test with 22 organisations

Public Follower Testing

Commercialisation
Evaluation, Impact Assessment
Review / **Public Deliverables**

Reflection on (AI) hype

For us, AI was always an embedded tool, not the magic cure to make all underlying challenges and work disappear



Circular Economy in Europe...

...requires many solutions – some perceived as innovations – to scale in many locations driven by many people

Draghi 2024: EU has no innovation but a scale up problem

Thousands of innovations ready

Information: cities do not know of suitable existing innovation

Operation: cities cannot follow prior examples

Organisation: cities cannot cross silos / have no resources

Change: circular = innovative (?) = difficult to adopt

**Slow uptake
endangers circular
solutions / innovation¹**

Fewer cities, fewer procurements,
slower or no scale up, etc.



CircularPSP solutions make success of domain-specific solutions more likely

¹ [Circular City Centre \(2025\)](#); [Circular Cities Declaration Report \(2022\)](#);

Successful solutions

The PCP procured two competing solutions providing choice to the demand side

Solution



Consortium

VCG.AI

SWAPPSI (lead)

GTE

INNCISO innovation

Presenter(s)



Kim Turk
Mehes



Mateja
Dermastia



Veronika
Levak



Vitória Fank Spohr

Demonstration of solutions later during lunch (or online 1:1)

CIRCULAR CITIES IN ACTION · BRUSSELS · 2 JULY 2026

CircOS: From circular innovation to city uptake at scale

Kim Turk Mehes, CircOS deployment lead



CircOS — the value, the evidence and the road to scale

1



Value

How does CircOS address city challenges and help municipal staff in their daily work?

2



Evidence

What proves CircOS works in real city settings?

3

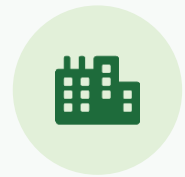


Road to scale

What conditions are still missing for full scale adoption?

One platform that turns fragmented city ambition into circular implementation.

CircOS bridges the gap between city strategy, municipal implementation and circular market activation.



CITY / MUNICIPALITY

Strategies, roadmaps, investment plans and projects spread across departments.



Turns priorities into actionable workflows, links actions to KPIs, and prepares circular procurement criteria.



CIRCULAR ECOSYSTEM

Suppliers, project partners and value-chain actors respond to clearer, better-structured municipal demand.

Reducing the work that keeps cities stuck

CircOS is not only a tool for circular champions. It translates circular strategy into action – and makes the necessary connection – internally and externally.

FOR MUNICIPAL STAFF



Department heads

Align projects with strategy, KPIs, tasks and responsibilities, reusable templates.



CE teams

Less manual research; stronger cross-departmental coordination.



Procurement

Circular criteria and mission objective alignment gaps surfaced early.



Decision makers

Documented evidence, adoption lessons across cities.



FOR BUSINESSES

Offer

Products and services visible to cities in the CircOS ecosystem directory.

Market consultations

May be invited to pre-tendering activities before criteria are set.

Implementation partner

May team up with cities to deliver circular projects on the ground.

Platform access

May have access to additional platform features and VCG services.

Connecting circular strategy to operational action

CircOS makes circular action easier for ordinary municipal work — not just for CE specialists — reducing friction across departments, procurement, data governance and implementation.

1 Policy commitment

City priorities and political mandate as the starting point.

2 Mission: strategic foundation

A structured foundation with objectives, KPIs and strategic projects reflecting city priorities.

3 Workflows: circular processes

Concrete implementation steps: tasks, stakeholders, funding sources and monitoring.

4 Procurement: circular tenders

Tender analysis and suggested circular criteria turn procurement into a transition lever.

5 Learning & community

Role-based learning, reusable templates, peer exchange and city-to-city networking.

6 Scale

Reusable workflows, monitored KPIs and shared learning move cities from project to repeatable practice.

ADDED VALUE



The impact potential CircOS can unlock

Documented potential across different KPIs — with workflows already partly laid out to realise it.



CLIMATE

↓ **239M**

kg CO₂e



ENERGY

406M

kWh saved



MATERIALS

1.0B

kg recycled



WATER

98M

m³ water

Annual workflow-level estimates across 17 testing cities.

A city-governed platform for municipal use.

Grounded in real municipal and EU circular knowledge, run by cities, and built to stay under their control.

× **Not generic AI**



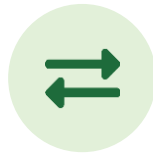
Outputs AI generated but grounded in curated CE knowledge and own city documentation, in one structured repository.

× **Not a one-off consultancy**



A platform cities run day-to-day across departments, with human oversight on every AI output.

× **Not a closed platform**



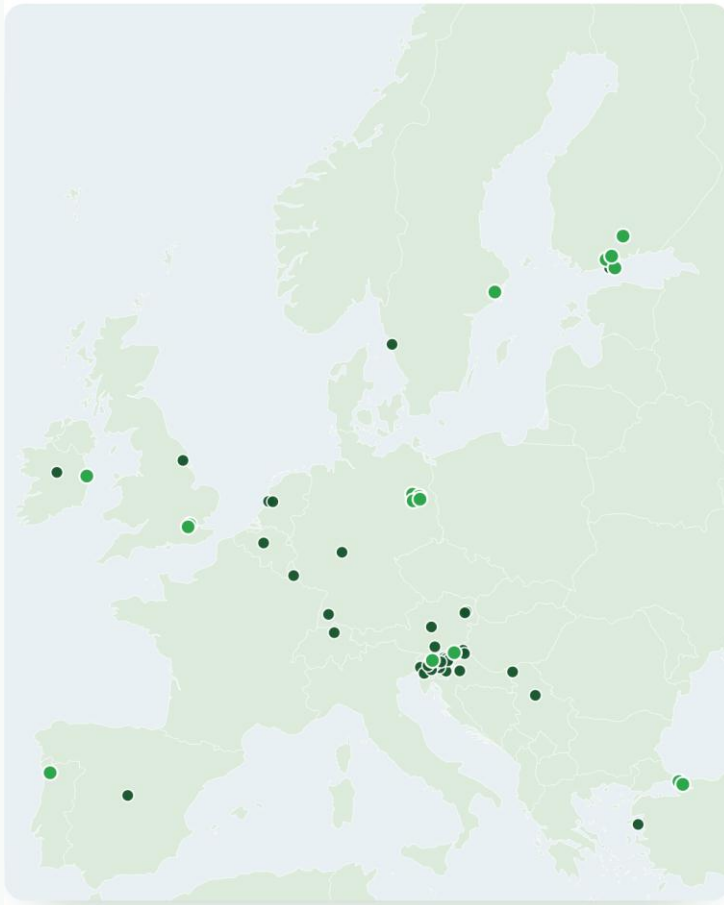
EU-hosted, avoiding lock-in — AI models, providers and locations may change, but cities retain control over data and CircOS outputs.

COMPLIANT BY DESIGN

EU AI Act · GDPR · ISO/IEC 27001 in progress · auditable · no training of shared models

CircOS deployed across Europe. Ready to scale.

Tested across Europe to prove its value in real city settings.



17

countries in the
CircOS ecosystem

50+

organisations
introduced / engaged

79

staff
active in testing

26 city administrations · 4 over 1M · 22 under 1M residents

42

Circular Missions
generated

273

Circular Workflows

27

Real tenders analysed

Kranj: strategy on paper to project portfolio

A concrete city proof point showing how CircOS supports uptake and implementation.



€27,560

personnel cost saved in year 1

2,750 h

hours freed — same team, same budget

84%

ROI on the €15K pilot, year one

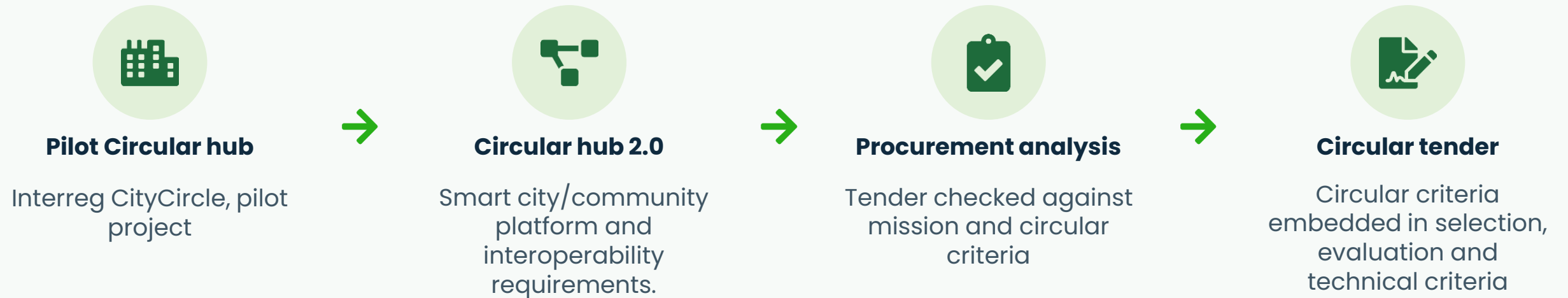
Mission drafting 6 months → 1 week



“Mission Building Blocks provided a clear overview of city-wide activities, helping align departments and maintain a shared strategic direction.”

Kranj example: from strategic project to circular tender logic

CircOS generated Kranj's Circular Mission and linked a strategic project to procurement action.



WHAT CIRCOS ADDED

Upscaled a pilot project into a strategic project · Created a workflow for its implementation · Turned circular procurement into an implementation lever.

Lessons learned: what worked

Testing showed demand and value across the city uptake journey.



AI can equalise knowledge

It brings specialist-level CE thinking closer to practitioners who need it in limited time.



Procurement is the lever

Circular criteria integration can become routine, not specialist-only.



Workflows close the gap

Cities value structured implementation steps, KPIs, partner identification and funding angles.



Learning supports uptake

Role-based learning helps non-CE staff reach a working level of circular literacy.

Strategic takeaway CircOS will work best when it becomes part of how cities plan, procure and learn together.

Bridging the adoption gap

Validated CE platforms need an adoption model, not just access credentials to cross the “Valley of death”.

2026**Grant-funding: validation**

Tested platform, real city evidence & proven use cases.

**2027****Adoption: de-risked, co-invested**

Public + private bridge: adoption funds, framework routes and partners to support uptake.

**2028****Routine use at scale**

Embedded municipal practice & commercially sustainable deployment.

ADOPTION-FUNDING BRIDGE**THE “VALLEY OF DEATH”****THE ASK**

Create a dedicated adoption-funding stream and facilitate relationships with adoption and scale-up partners, including development banks.

Validated product. Not yet proven market.

Three structural gaps between validated product and investable company — and what closes them.



The sales-cycle gap

Municipal procurement runs 12–18 months. Meaningful recurring revenue is projected from 2029 — outside standard VC timescales.



Free access $\neq$ willingness to pay

Every month a city uses CircOS without a budget line tells investors the opposite of what unlocks capital.



One contract changes everything

A single Starter contract at €15,000 is worth more to an investment conversation than fifty positive evaluations.

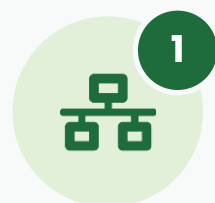
That first paying city is what we are working towards right now.

THE ROAD TO SCALE

From first clients to scale

Starting now, scaling as readiness grows.

OUR GO TO MARKET STRATEGY



Start with our network

Pilot cities, the CircularPSP Followers network and the wider VCG network — a warm base, not cold outreach.

Easy to contract

Starter license priced to fall below or near public-procurement thresholds — cities start without a full tender.

Grow through partners

Regional agencies, clusters and multipliers co-deliver and multiply reach; each city adds value for the next.

ANNUAL SaaS LICENCES TAILORED TO SIZE AND AMBITION



Freemium
Start today



Starter
Interest to implementation



Plus
Scale with support

What each actor can do next

Bridging the adoption gap will take time — but every actor in the room can help us scale.



CITIES

Start with one real use case



EU / PUBLIC FUNDERS

Make adoption fundable



CITY NETWORKS & MULTIPLIERS

Turn isolated use into shared practice



SCALING PARTNERS

Help implementation become routine

CircOS is validated and can be used now. Help create the conditions for us to become municipal infrastructure used across Europe.



READY WHEN YOU ARE

Your city's circular future starts here.

Book a 30-minute discovery — and see your first Circular Mission generated live, with your own city's documents.

DEPLOYMENT LEAD

Kim Turk Mehes

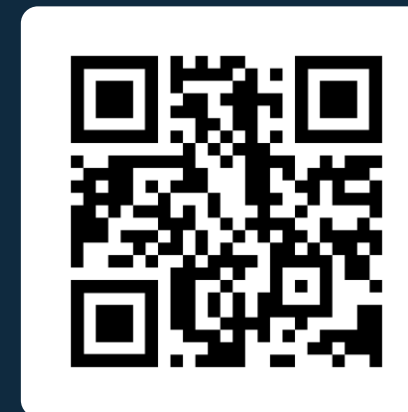
kim@vcg.ai

VCG.AI GMBH

Seyffer Strasse 34
70197 Stuttgart, Germany



Book a demo



Watch the explainer



CircularAI

Empowering cities for a sustainable future



Brussels

2 July 2026

Contents

1. The Challenge
2. Solution
3. How it works & key benefits
4. How it supports our customers
5. Technology
6. Business model
7. Achievements and Next Steps
8. What our users highlight
9. Join our community

The Challenge

For cities, circular economy transitions can be **complex, costly and difficult to implement.**

"We know that we want our city to be more circular, but we don't know where to start, or how to get there"

"We already have targets. What we lack is time, resources, and a clear path to turn long term objectives into real actions."

"Some members of our teams don't have the knowledge"

"Every time there's a new regulation, we start from scratch. There's no institutional memory."

"We find it difficult to engage other departments"

"We don't know where to start. What does circular economy even mean for our sector?"

"We know circular economy contracts are out there , but qualifying and delivering on CE criteria takes more capacity than we have."

"Our team wants to upskill on sustainability but there's nothing tailored to what we actually do."

CircularAI

One stop shop for the circular economy

The screenshot displays the CircularAI dashboard. On the left is a dark teal sidebar with the CircularAI logo and a list of navigation items: Dashboard, Cai Assistant, My Journey, My Projects, My Organisation's Profile, My City, Mission, Business Catalogue, Circularity Resources, Case Studies, Knowledge Hub, Events, Advanced Features, Settings, and Platform Resources. The main content area has a light grey header with a menu icon, a circular progress indicator, and user controls including a 'Launch Tour' button, notification and language icons, a theme toggle, and a user profile for 'Vitoria Fank Spohr'. Below the header, the 'Dashboard' section features two large green cards. The 'My Journey' card, titled 'EXPLORER', shows a progress bar at 16/20 points and a 'Retake Self Assessment' button. The 'Mission' card shows 100% progress and a 'Go to Mission Overview' button. Below these are three smaller sections: 'Upcoming Events' with a calendar for June 2026, 'Changemakers' with a 'Monthly Leaderboard' showing 'Lena Witt' with 7 points and a 1-week streak, and 'Projects Distribution' with a pie chart and a 'Total Projects: 9' count. A computer monitor icon in the bottom right corner displays the CircularAI logo.

Dashboard

My Journey Retake Self Assessment

EXPLORER

My Journey Progress 16/20 points

Mission Go to Mission Overview

Review the Mission

Mission Progress 100%

Upcoming Events

June 2026

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13

Changemakers

3 **Monthly Leaderboard** 30

Lena Witt 7 pts

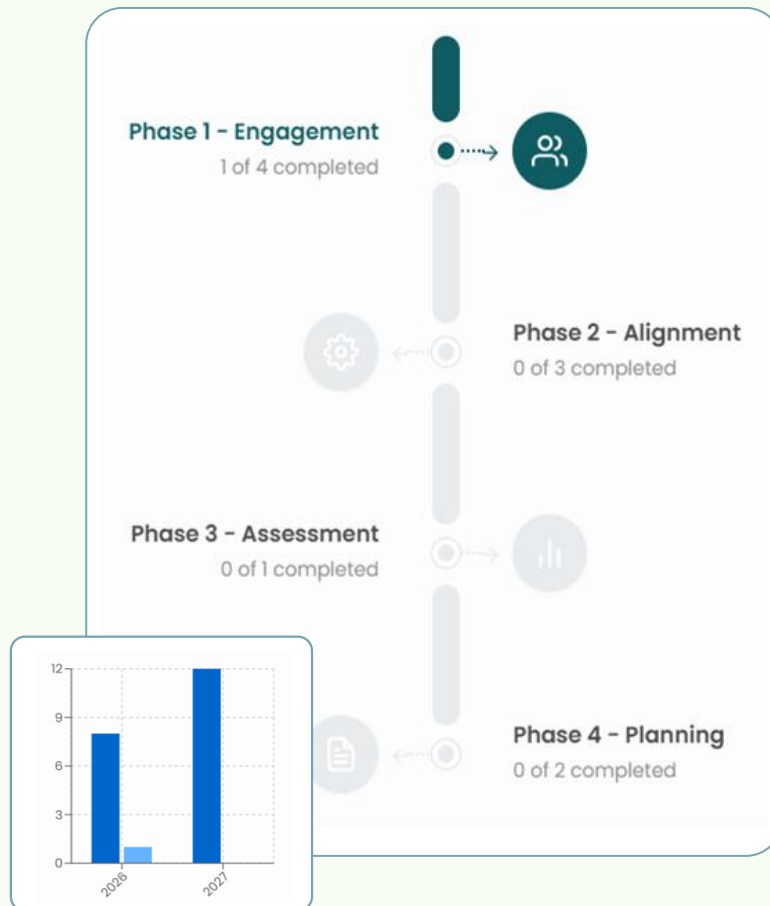
Lena Witt 1 weeks streak

Projects Distribution Impact Areas Sectors Total Projects: 9

CircularAI

One stop shop for the circular economy

Build & monitor your Circular Economy Strategy



Define projects & collaborate

Small-Business Home-Textile Up-Cycle Hub Select

Summary
A shared design and production hub that helps local small businesses turn post-consumer textile waste into new home-textile collections.

Full Details
The hub provides a co-working space equipped with cutting-edge textile processing tools (cutting tables, sewing...

Sector: Others

Impact Area: Waste Management, Job...

Up-Cycle Design Lab for Small Business Home... Select

Show me more ideas

Build your team's competence

Upskilling title #7 **Circular Procurement** Let's go!

GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

GPP
Green Public Procurement

GPP is a **voluntary** instrument and Member States can determine the extent to which policies or criteria are applied.

However, there are legal requirements in EU legislation that are mandatory for all public purchasers, including:

- Clean Vehicles Directive
- Energy Efficiency Directive
- Energy Performance of Buildings Directive
- Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Directive

*and
much
more...*

Delivered through a specialised & secured AI powered platform.

How it supports our customers



Municipalities & NGOs

- ✓ **Strategy development** through a guided process (no external consultants needed)
- ✓ **Competence building** via learning in context and curated circular economy resources
- ✓ **Information sharing:** centralised platform to track strategy and project progress
- ✓ **AI-driven support** for complex projects with an assistant trained in circular economy
- ✓ **Creation of procurement processes** aligned with EU and local standards
- ✓ **Access to aggregated funding information** to find financing innovative projects



Businesses

- ✓ **Automatised and guided project creation** to develop Circular Economy solutions and products
- ✓ **Tracking of sustainability and circular economy** policies and projects in one single platform
- ✓ **Connecting** with new partners and clients
- ✓ **Procurement support** to meet circular economy procurement requirements
- ✓ **Access to aggregated funding information** to find financing innovative projects

European technology, European data, European control

*CircularAI runs on European infrastructure end-to-end — **GDPR by design and aligned with the EU AI Act.***

1

AI processing in the EU

Models on Scaleway (EU sovereign cloud); app, search & data in Azure's EU region.

2

Open model LLMs, self-hosted, built on open standards

Llama 3.1 + GPT-OSS run by us — no external US AI services, no vendor lock-in.

3

Data stays in your organisation

Each organisation's data is separated and access-controlled — never shared across cities.

4

Never used to train the AI

Model weights are never updated with customer data, so your information can't resurface.

All processing inside the EU



Scaleway • EU

AI models & embeddings

Azure • EU region

App, API, search & databases

Flexible plans to fit your organisation

Basic (Up to 10 users)	Advanced (Up to 50 users)	Premium (Up to 500 users)	Enterprise (More than 500 users)
Price Upon Request	Price Upon Request	Price Upon Request	Price Upon Request
Start Free Trial	Start Free Trial	Start Free Trial	Start Free Trial
Includes: > Limited Cai > Core Modules	Includes: > All Basic features > Extended Cai > Core Modules > Advanced Modules (Organisation's Data + Procurement)	Includes: > All Advanced features > Unlimited Cai > All Modules > Premium Support	Includes: > All Premium features > Tailored Modules > Extensive Modifications > Bespoke Support

Indicative
plans:

For departments / small companies

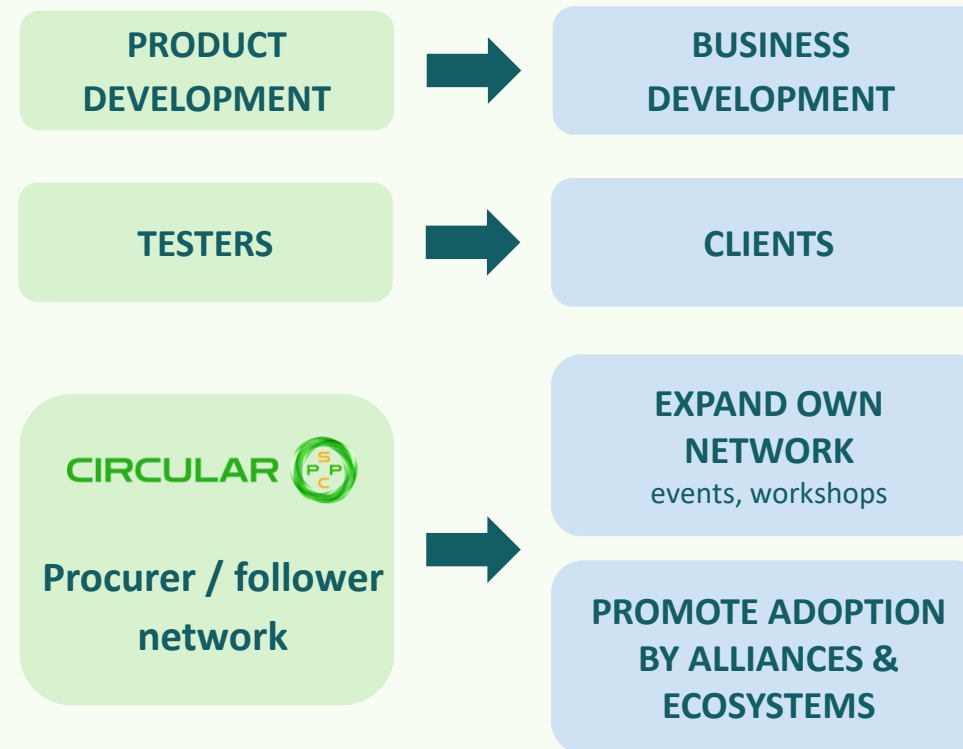
For larger organisations / wide
municipality onboarding

Achievements & Next Steps

Current Reach



Next step: commercialisation phase



Challenges

Scale beyond current regions/ languages

Reach to right decision maker (top down mandate)

Complex procurement processes B2G

EU scope: prioritise the key dissemination activities

What our users highlight

Setting KPIs and monitoring the mission.

"The possibility of having one's documents reviewed by Cai in a protected environment."

*"It gives **insights to develop the mission**, and helps when we don't know where to start."*

*"I think this platform will be **a good time saver**."*

Operationalising the company's strategy by setting actionable objectives and defining teams.

"The link between my project and the mission (ideally defined by management) and the automatic evaluation."

Knowledge at hand:
tailored resources and learning within the task context.

"Identify specific targets for KPIs with help from Cai. His lines of argumentation were both helpful and plausible!"

Knowledge sharing on the strategy and its progress within the organisation.



CircularAI

Empowering cities for a sustainable future

Are you **shaping the future of Europe's Circular Economy** actions, innovations and legislations?



Spread the word and help us reach the right organisations, programmes or city networks

Do you want to **operationalise the Circular Economy** transition in your municipality or your business?



Join the CircularAI Ecosystem and test for free!
Open until July



Free testing!
Open until July



<https://app.circularai.io/sign-up>

City Experience – Circular Berlin

What it means in practice to work with an AI platform in a public sector context

Dina Padalkina



dina@circular.berlin

[LinkedIn](#)



Circular Berlin

We are a non-profit organisation driving systemic change toward a regenerative and resource-resilient city.

We connect **politics, education, business, and society** to translate circular ideas into daily practice.

Circular Market

Circular Culture

Circular Governance





Navigating Berlin's unique transition

The Dual City Status

Operating as both a capital city and a federal state requires balancing macro legislation with daily execution for 3.8 million residents.

The Two-Tier Fragmentation

Governance is divided between a central Senate and 12 autonomous districts acting as independent "mini-cities" with divergent local strategies.

The Implementation Challenge

While the central Senate can mandate a city-wide vision, local execution is entirely dependent on fragmented district offices.

Berlin is developing a comprehensive **Circular Economy Strategy (targeted for mid-2027)** to move beyond waste management and zero waste into integrated economic design.

Photo by Clément Prous from Pexels

What can be the role of local multiplier?

Operating as an independent, non-municipal partner allowed us to serve as an agile [Circular Innovation Broker](#).

CIRCULAR



EU funded project, 2023-2026

Istanbul, Turkey

Guimarães, Portugal

Circular Berlin,
Germany

City
Network, Sweden

Helsinki, Finland

City Network
Slovenia

Sandyford, Ireland

ReLondon, UK¹

Barriers to Innovation Entry

- **Extra work & unclear results**
Testing new tools disrupts daily routines, and staff hesitate to invest time without knowing the final outcome.
- **Political shifts & future uncertainty**
Without CE long-term city plans, political changes can stop projects, making it hard to predict if solutions will stay relevant.

Benefits for the transfer

- **Independent bridge-builder**
Being outside government lets us move faster, handle the heavy coordination.
- **Project "translator"**
We explain complex technical solutions in simple terms.
- **Long-term commitment**
We ensure circular initiatives keep going.

Testing two digital solutions across 4 distinctly different stakeholders.



From Berlin...

10 Senat Departments

12 Districts with circa 10
Departments

Municipal waste management
company

...in CircularPSP

1

Senate Department for Urban Mobility,
Transport, Climate Action and the
Environment,
Team from department of Circular economy

2

Districts with the personnel support from
Climate Change Officer

1

Daughter company of the municipal waste
management company

Berlin Circular Economy
strategy

- Strategy objective is to help conserve and reduce the use of primary resources
- Comprehensive process of multi stakeholder engagement.
- Key focuses on the Construction, Long lasting goods (e.g. electronics, furniture, textiles), Short lasting goods (food, packaging)

The Testing Reality: Questions that defined diversity of problems

Photo by AI25.Studio from [pixels](#)

Can these tools actually help us bridge the gap between high-level macro strategy and daily operations?

How can we use these platforms to motivate our teams to establish, design, and take ownership of new circularity projects?

Are there other European cities successfully deploying these exact solutions, or are we testing something unproven?

Will integrating these new platforms help optimise our internal data collection?

Can this software actually help us establish and monitor them without overwhelming our staff?



The Wins

Where the tools added value



The Ideation blueprint

For teams struggling to start circular projects from scratch, the AI-assistant was a win for generating actionable ideas, such as building concrete sustainability guidelines for local public events or validate procurement alignments with Circular Economy.



The analytical mirror

The automated data-synthesis features provided interesting insights giving a snapshot of the current Status Quo, helping see exactly where to move next.



Operationalising big strategy

Users experimented with mapping their internal goals and project reporting directly into structured KPI and OKR frameworks.



Funding magnet

Highlighting specific funding opportunities within the software was highlighted as a concrete hook to get new initiatives off the ground, but it must be continuously maintained.

The Reality Check

The Administrative & Technical Walls



Innovation vs imagination

Insufficient knowledge in AI and / or CE makes it hard for users to "envision" use cases. Tools should provide guidelines and inspiration at every step.



Strict compliance red lights

In the municipal context, in the municipal context, IT security is non-negotiable with the strong IT backend to meet formal IT security standards.



Localisation is King

It is not another software, Circular Economy implementation requires a local actions, that is why one size fits all does not work. "Local" means language, stakeholder ecosystem, and specific municipal processes.



First impression matters

Even in testing, it is hard to maintain momentum beyond the pilot phase, if something brings frictions.

Can municipalities actually drive innovation?

...who knows, but there is no other choice....

- 1 Mandate action, don't wait for volunteers**
Digital and circular innovation cannot rest on the individual motivation and understaffed employees. Leadership must issue a top-down mandate to act.
- 2 Design innovation spaces for administration**
Public administrations need to find ways to act dynamically to adopt new technology, rather than allowing rigid (procurement) rules to stall progress.
- 3 Secure Centralised Funding for Circular Economy**
Individual districts or departments struggle to find “free” budget to buy specialised software. Central governments must step in to fund such initiatives.
- 4 Fund the “Human Translators”**
Software alone does not solve systemic urban problems. Future funding should support human “facilitators”, like local Climate Mitigation Officers to guide implementation down to the lowest municipal levels.

Thank you!



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READ MORE
circular.berlin

Circular City – Zirkuläre Stadt e.V.
Rheinsberger Straße 34
10435 Berlin

City Experience - Guimarães

Using Circularity Platforms - What a city learns
when strategy meets the spreadsheet

Francisco Ferreira



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GUIMARÃES

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Guimarães

EU Green Capital 2026 - A city already deep in the transition



European Green Capital 2026



Guimarães 2030 strategy

Integrated vision linking climate neutrality, circular economy, biodiversity and participation.



RRRCICLO + Zero Waste

Holistic CE-strategy; biowaste separate collection scaling toward full coverage.



EU Mission city

Mission Climate-Neutral & Smart City; only Portuguese city in OECD highlights.

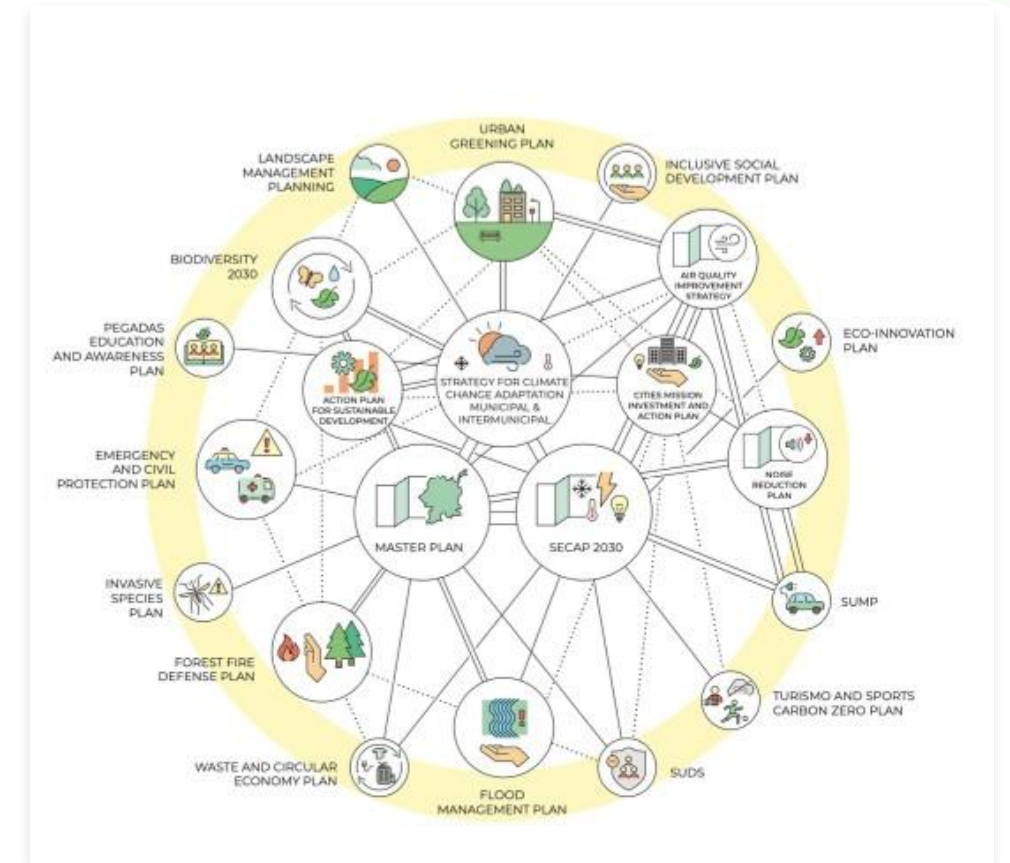


Bairro C + Laboratório da Paisagem

Carbon-zero demonstration district, partner association for research and monitoring.

Sustained political commitment has driven years of action on sustainability and innovation — including joining European consortia and projects like CircularPSP, where we believe we still have room to grow and learn.

Industrial shifts in Vale do Ave textile heartland — circularity can reshape consumption beyond municipal procurement.



Guimarães' integrated plans — Master Plan & SECAP 2030 at the centre, dozens of strategies interlinked.

This complexity is also a difficulty.

Our challenges

The gap between the strategy and the action



WHAT WE HAVE

Vision, strategy, roadmap

- Political commitment
- Headline targets for 2030
- A circular economy strategy on file



the gap

Challenges of most cities:

- A linear mindset
- Scattered knowledge
- Hard to act day-to-day
- Limited transition capacity



WHAT WE FACE

A blank page, a deadline

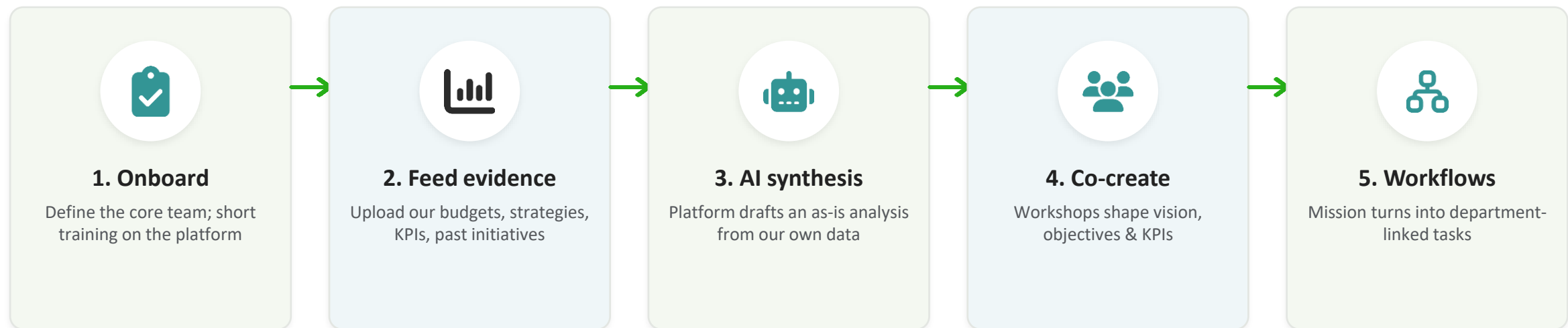
- Which circular criteria go in the next tender?
- How do we turn the strategy into a real mission & projects?
- Who signs off if an auditor later asks why?

Strategy → Procurement. | Vision → Mission. | Plans → Systemic Change.

Most cities never cross this gap — not for lack of will, but for lack of a bridge.

Testing – Example Onboarding (1/3)

Turning various city documents into a structured draft City Mission

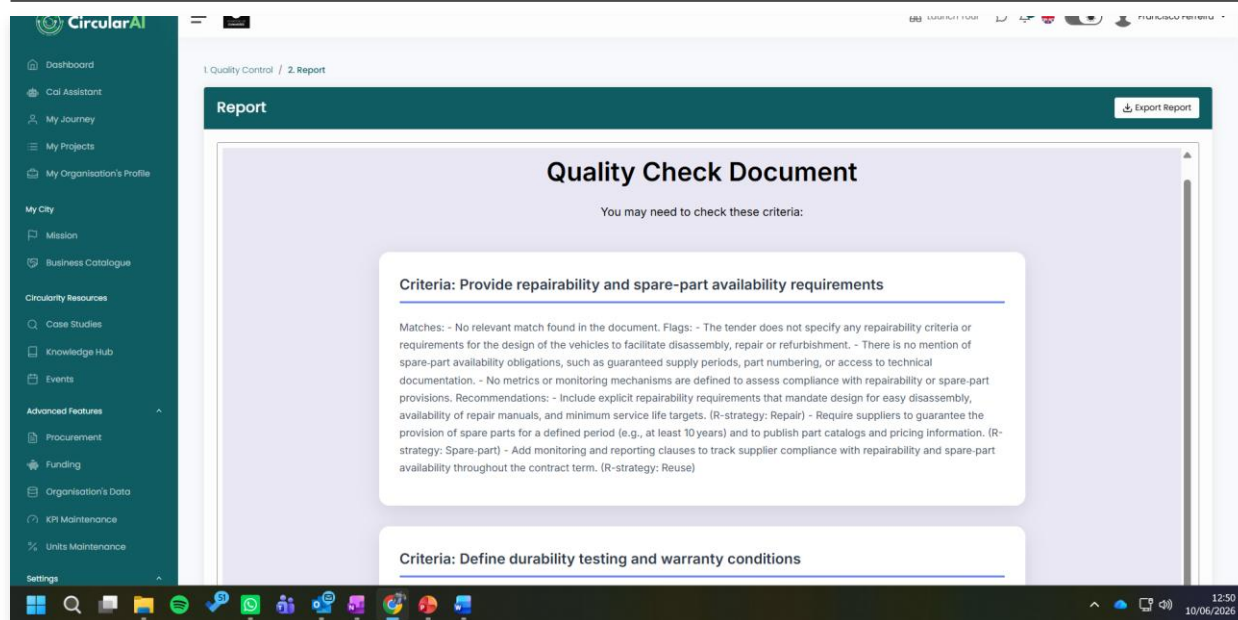


We stayed in control throughout. The tool proposed; our team reviewed, corrected and confirmed. The Mission stayed ours — it just got us to a draft faster.

Testing – Outputs from CircOS, CircularAI (2/3)

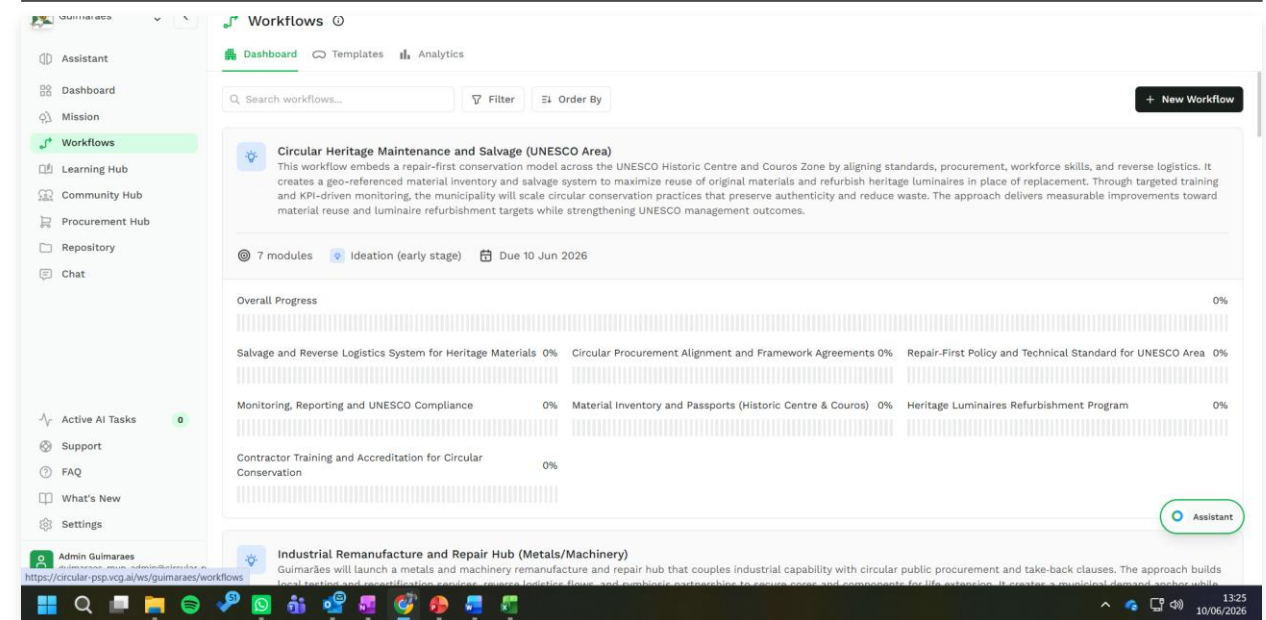
Not demos — our own tenders and strategy, run through the tools

CIRCULARAI — PROCUREMENT CHECK



- ▶ We uploaded a **real tender for biowaste-collection vehicles**. It proposed reparability requirements, a 10-year spare-part guarantee and monitoring clauses.

CIRCOS — WORKFLOWS GENERATED FROM OUR MISSION



- ▶ It structured our **Mission into next-stage workflows** — each with modules, tasks and partner departments to start the delivery.

AI is no final answer — but a draft for which we had the confidence to evolve on the platform.

Testing – Example Capacity Building (3/3)

Capacity-building, built into the daily use of the tool



Learning in context

Lessons and case studies surface inside the task you're doing — not in a separate course you never open.



Personalised by role

A self-assessment tailors content to your job and experience with levels you progress through.



Built for sharing

Community and knowledge spaces designed to connect cities and spread good practice over time.

“

The most underrated feature wasn't the AI. It was that learning came to the person, instead of the person having to go find the learning.

— Reflection from the Guimarães team

Lessons Learnt – Strength (1/2)

The strength we observed (selection)

DAY-TO-DAY



Blank-page problem, solved

The single biggest win. A structured first draft beats a blank document every time — it lowers the activation energy to act.



Structure & momentum

The tools forced us to gather evidence and gave the team a shared, visible process — valuable beyond the AI itself.

UPSCALING WITHIN CITY



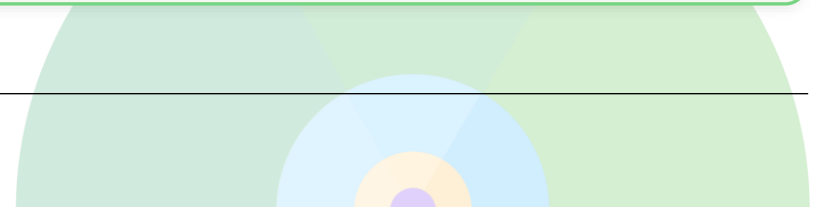
Knowledge, in context

Putting case studies and criteria where the work happens turned ‘knowledge that exists somewhere’ into knowledge we used.



Lower barrier for non-experts

You no longer had to be a circular economy specialist to make a sensible first move.



Lessons Learnt – Considerations (2/3)

HOW TO APPROACH THE SOLUTIONS



Outputs are a starting point

Drafts still need expert review to fit local context, law and ambition — great to start from, not to submit as-is.



Trust is the hard part

Procurement is risk-averse. 'The AI suggested it' is not an answer an auditor accepts. Accountability stays human.

WHEN YOU START



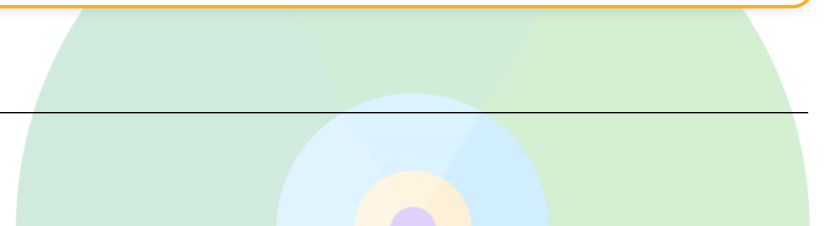
Data in, value out

The Mission is only as good as the documents we fed it. Poor or missing local data limits everything.



Hard work is done, but...

We tested from alpha pilot-stage, so we know it creates value. Still, some features require polishing based achieved with more users.



Lessons Learnt – Adoption (3/3)

What a city needs before these tools stick

BEFORE YOU START



A willingness to try

Someone with authority makes the tool part of how city/department work — not an optional extra for enthusiasts.



Decent local data

Invest in getting your own evidence in order — these tools work best when a city knows its own baseline.

EARLY ON



Clear accountability rules

Define up front: AI drafts, humans decide and sign. Write it down so staff feel safe using it.



Supplier & peer support

At start bi-weekly Q&A with users, peer cities, a real human to ask. Tools adopted in isolation get abandoned.

AND REMEMBER



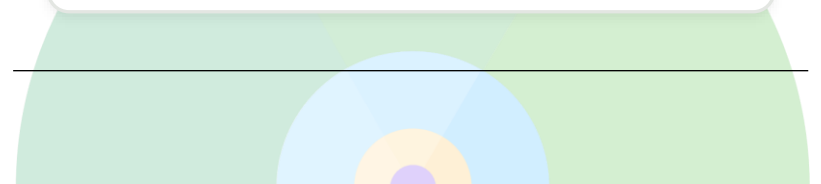
Time and training

Protect a little capacity for staff to learn. Embedded learning helps, but zero time still equals zero adoption.



Patience for iteration

Treat year one as learning, not proof. Adoption is a change process, not an install.



Final Messages

What to take home — depending on who you are



If you're a city

Don't wait for the perfect tool. Start with one painful task — like a single tender — and let a draft get you moving.



If you're a solution provider

The winning feature isn't smarter AI — it's removing friction and earning the trust of a risk-averse buyer.



If you're a researcher

The open question isn't model accuracy. It's adoption, accountability and how knowledge actually moves between cities.



If you fund or buy

Fund the change process, not just the licence. Mandate, training and data are where adoption lives or dies.

Circularity platforms alone won't make our cities circular. But they can lower the cost of starting — and starting, repeatedly, is how transition actually happens.

EU Agenda for Cities: Driving Growth and Prosperity



*Pia Laurila, Team Leader – Cities
Unit 02 Cities, Communities, People
Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy*

EU Agenda for Cities: Mandate

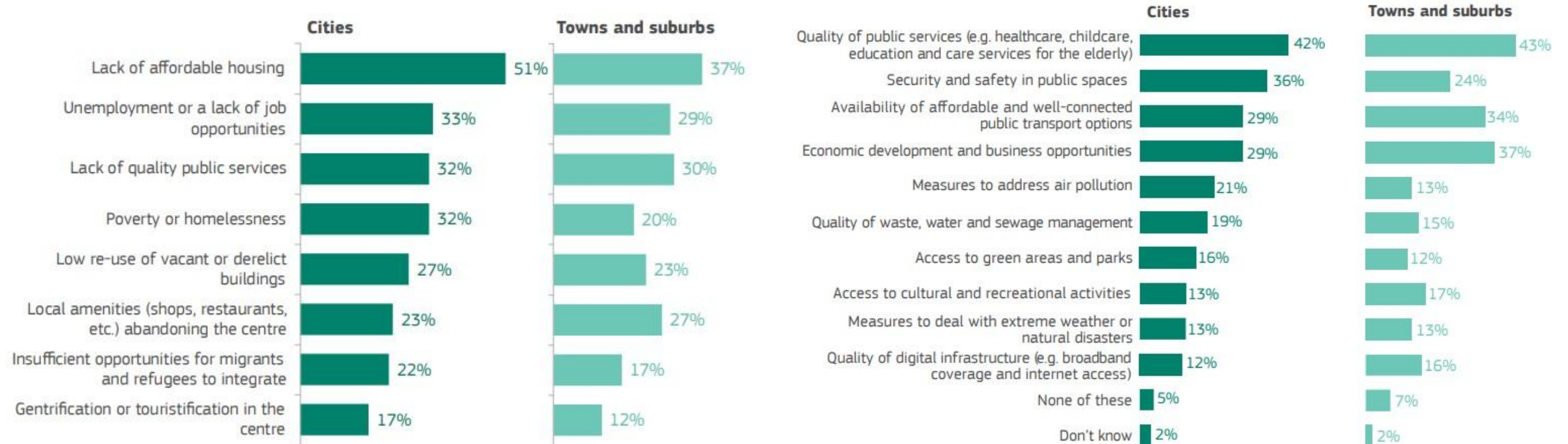
- Preparation of the Agenda originates from **mission letter** of President von der Leyen.
- This Agenda will reinforce the EU's approach to **sustainable urban development**, focusing on key areas of action.
- Communication adopted on 3 December 2025.



EU Agenda for Cities: Rationale for action



Cities and EU Policies: Eurobarometer



In the place where you live, how much of a problem, if at all, do you think each of the following issues are?
% 'An immediate and urgent problem'

In the place where you live, which of the following aspects do you think need improving most?
Please select up to three aspects

[Inforegio - New Eurobarometer survey highlights urgent urban challenges and investment needs across EU cities](#)



EU Agenda for Cities: Key areas of inter-connected action



Competitiveness,
digitalisation,
innovation and
investment



Social
inclusion
and
equality



Security, safety
and
preparedness



Affordable,
sustainable,
decent
quality and
inclusive
housing and
buildings



Climate
action,
environment
and clean
energy



Mobility



International
cooperation

Climate action, environment, and clean energy

- “Cities are strategic actors to support implementation of **circular economy, waste management, re-use and recycling measures**, air quality and noise legislation, as well as protection and enhancement of urban nature and tree canopy cover.” (page 10 of the EU Agenda for Cities)



EU Agenda for Cities: aims and action lines

Aims:

1. **Strengthening multilevel governance** and cooperation by better integrating cities' interests into EU policymaking
2. **Streamlining diverse EU-level support** available to cities and urban area.

Action lines:



EU Agenda for Cities : Action Plan

No	Action	Timeline
CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE		
1.	High-level political dialogue with local authorities	From 2026 onwards
2.	Targeted technical consultations with urban practitioners	From 2026 onwards
3.	Regular dialogue with the European Committee of the Regions and the European Parliament	From 2026 onwards
4.	Cities Forum (biennial)	Next one in 2027
5.	State of European Cities report	From 2026 onwards
SIMPLIFICATION and CAPACITY BUILDING		
6.	EU Cities web-portal	Q4 2025
7.	European Urban Initiative – Innovative Actions 4th call, and Cities helpdesk	Q1 2026 and Q3 2026
8.	EU Cities platform	2028
INVESTMENTS		
9.	Support under the current multiannual financial framework	Ongoing to 2027
10.	Support under the next multiannual financial framework	2028-2034



Continuous dialogue

- **High-level political dialogue:** Annual forum for local leaders to flag bottlenecks and inform EU policy.
- **Technical level dialogue:** Consultations to share good practices and simplify tools and procedures.
- **Cities Forum:** Platform for exchange and policy debate among urban stakeholders.
- **State of European Cities Report:** Evidence base for policymaking. Next edition in 2026.

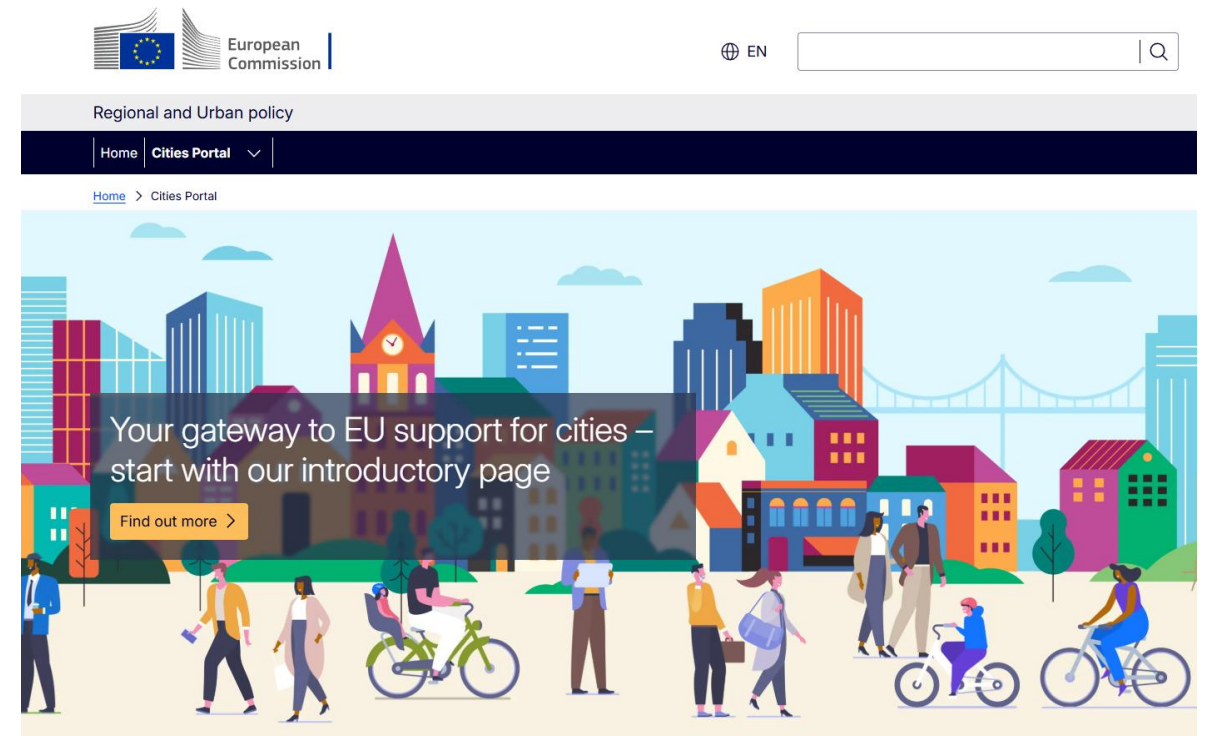


Simplification and capacity building

EU Cities web-portal

consolidates information on support opportunities for cities

- Brings together **80+ EU programmes and initiatives** relevant to cities and urban areas of all sizes.
- **Data and tools corner** to be developed in 2026.



EU Cities Platform for next MFF 2028-2034

1. **Capacity and knowledge building:** cities' strategic planning, administrative capacity, peer learning, joint procurement, industry-city dialogue, synergies with national initiatives.
2. **Support for innovative projects:** direct funding for cities to design and test innovative, scalable urban solutions.
3. **Funding, finance and advisory support:** structured information, technical assistance, support to access and combining EU, national and private funding.
4. **Data and tools repository:** *urban data and tools, interoperability, simpler reporting, common indicators, complementing State of European Cities Report.*
5. **Support for continuous dialogue:** high-level and technical exchanges enabling cities' participation in EU policymaking, link with Urban Agenda for EU and other EU and international city networks.



Towards future Platform's data and tools repository...

Urban Data Platform of Joint Research Centre

- Provides comprehensive overview of social, economic, and environmental factors shaping life in European cities.
- Includes interactive dashboards and publications providing insights into urban trends, future projections, and strategies for sustainable development.



EU Agenda for Cities - investments

Invesments	Developments
Support under current multiannual financial framework 2021-2027	Implementation of Cohesion policy programmes ongoing for 2021-2027 period, with estimates indicating more than EUR 24 billion planned by Member States to support sustainable urban development ('urban earmarking') Other instruments are in full implementation stage
Support under next multiannual financial framework 2028-2034	EU Agenda for Cities is reference document when engaging in discussions at national level on future investment and funding in view of next MFF (in complementarity with other territorial strategies) as it encourages Member States and regions to step up their ambition in resourcing of their urban strategies Cities may benefit from EU Facility (annex XV) Cities may benefit from European Competitiveness Fund under clean transition and decarbonisation part and under resilience and security, defense and space part



Communication material

[EU Agenda for Cities
Communication](#)

[Factsheet](#)

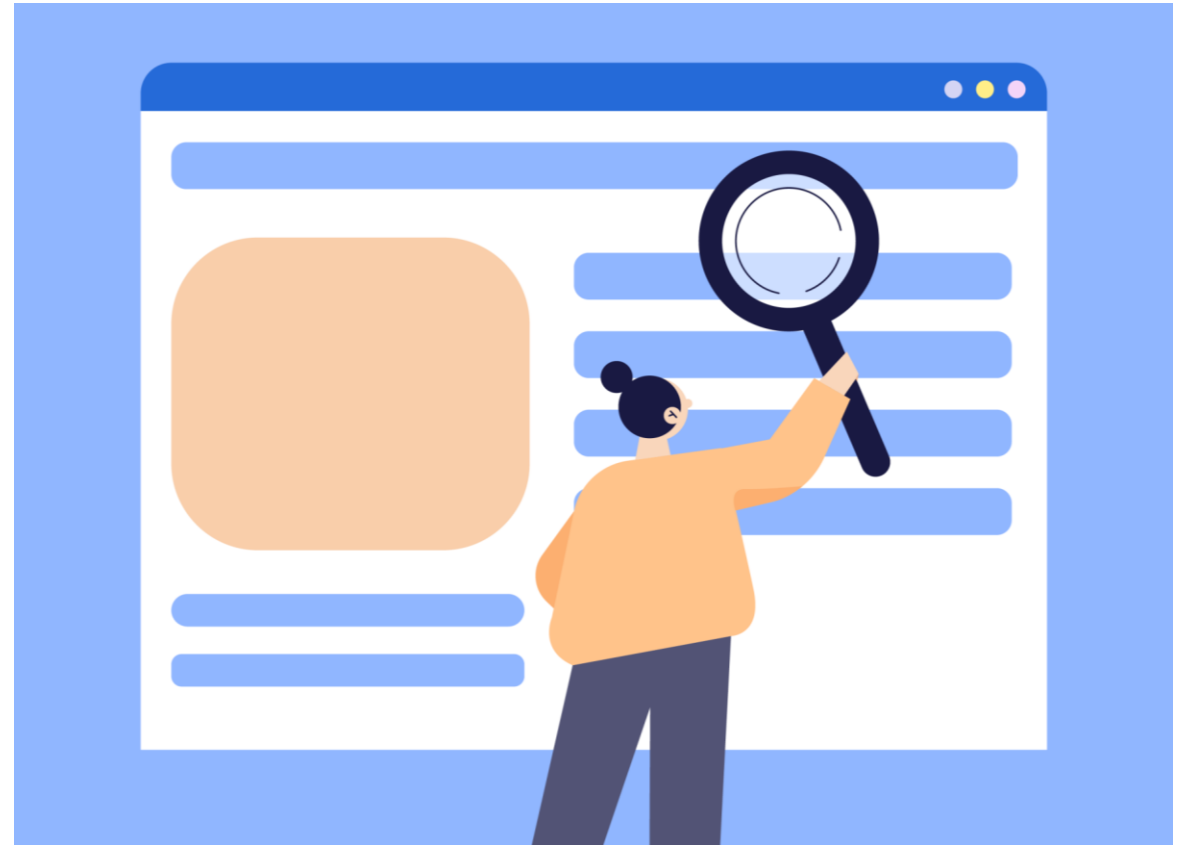
[Press release](#)

[Introductory video](#)

[Article on InfoRegio](#)

[EU Cities web Portal](#)

[News & Events | EUI](#)





Thank you for
your attention!

Panel

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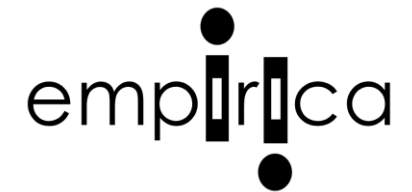
Closing Remarks

The project is preparing results.

The supplier solution can be tested / procured.

Scale up remains a challenge.

Georg Vogt



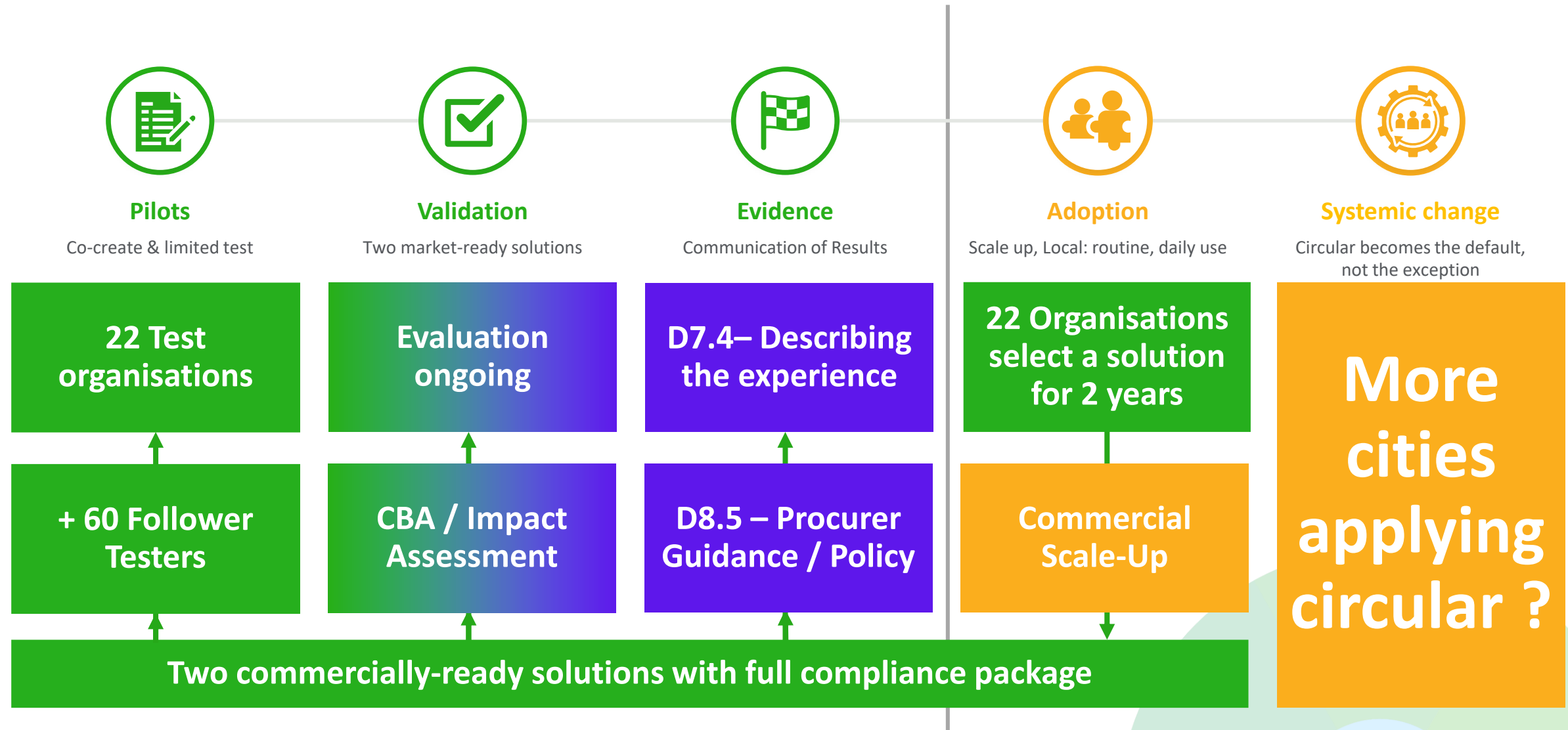
Georg.Vogt@empirica.com

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Where are we?

We piloted and improved. The next step is moving from ‘a few motivated people’ to ‘this is a tool for cities’



Startups and Scaleups in Europe...

Europe is working on helping to scale up European innovation ... but critical stepping stones are still missing

Draghi 2024: EU has no innovation but a scale up problem

Innovation ready

EU Strategy 2025: Choose Europe to Start and Scale

EU-based and EU-focused

Public Buyers: Networks to coordinate procurement

No fit, but we have Followers

Various¹ supports for innovation procurement, not uptake

Done that ... need revenue

SUI: Savings and Investments Union → more investment

Too early for most investors

We need to close the “gap” for new services and technologies (whatever it is)

¹ For instance [SPIN4EIC](#), [EAFIP](#), [Procure Innovation EU](#), [Public Buyers Community](#) – platform with communities of buyers, [InnoMatch](#), is now also has an innovation procurement focus and

....what can be done about scaling up

Evidence, multiplication, support and a push

Project

We need to document evidence in good deliverables + author policy paper

CircOS and CircularAI are launching commercialisation (feel free to book a demo)

Public organisations need to make a choice (and not wait for the “next thing”)

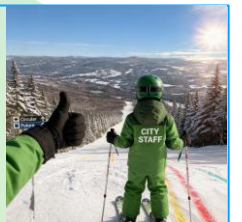
Present

Project and Suppliers appreciate opportunities to talk / demo / write to more cities

Funding to support uptake (vouchers, loan, costs, PPI, “stack”, ??? - **exchange welcome**)

All

Do you think this can create impact? - Go to the hill and try / give someone a push



Your next step

Give circular champions the tools to scale & circular newcomers to start circular activities

EMPOWER YOUR TEAM TO LIFT CIRCULAR POTENTIAL



[Website](#)



[Website](#)



BENEFITS OFFSETTING COSTS

Reduced effort to act / coordinate circular

More circular procurement

Cost savings avoiding linear activity (e.g. car)

Societal gains of avoided GHG

Drive circular innovation

Support EU innovation



Georg Vogt



Kim Turk Mehes



Vitória Fank Spohr



Draško Veselinovič



circularpsp.eu



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