

# CIRCULAR ECONOMY STRATEGY

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Circular economy is an economic model of production and consumption that involves sharing, lending, reusing, repairing, reconditioning and recycling of existing materials and products for as long as possible.

The aim is to extend the life cycle of products and services, helping to minimise waste and generate further value through recovery and reuse.

More than 2.2 billion tonnes of waste are produced annually in the European Union. The EU is promoting the transition to a circular economy as an alternative to the current linear *extract, produce, use* and *throw-away* economic model, which requires the availability of large quantities of readily available and cheap materials and energy.



The transition to a circular economy is necessary in order to:

- 🌿 **protect the environment:** reusing, recycling, and extending the useful life of products would slow down the extraction and use of natural resources, reduce habitat destruction and help limit the loss of biodiversity. Another benefit of the circular economy would be the reduction of total annual greenhouse gas emissions. More efficient, sustainable products that can be reused, upgraded and repaired would reduce the amount of waste and energy consumption.
- 🌿 **reduce dependence on raw materials:** many of the raw materials and resources essential for the economy are finite, but the world population continues to grow and consequently the demand for these finite resources also increases.
- 🌿 **create innovation, consumer benefits and new jobs:** the transition to a circular economy could increase competitiveness, provide economic benefits for consumers, stimulate innovation and economic growth, and create jobs.

Italy has equipped itself with a National Circular Economy Strategy, a reform envisaged in the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. The success of the ecological transition will depend on the public administration, research, businesses and non-profit organisations, which are called upon to work in harmony, as well as on a general increase in awareness and participation by society.

At the company level, the implementation of a circular economy strategy may be hindered by the difficulty of having information also in relation to existing exchange networks with stakeholders on these issues. These potential difficulties demonstrate the need to develop a cultural change towards circularity of products and services, acquired and offered to the market. For this reason, UNI has decided to implement the UNI/TS 11820 technical specification to start the path towards greater circularity in its activities, starting from its measurement. This process is part of the broader framework of application of UNI EN ISO 26000, which devotes particular attention to the control of the supply chain, in the path of sustainability across its activities, undertaken by UNI.



UNI/TS 11820 lists principles and operational elements of the circular economy.

From these principles, several indicators have been derived to measure the circularity of an organisation that are linked to **all phases and activities of the supply chain**. The study of the technical specification and its applicability to our services reality allowed us to highlight some points of attention related to our activities:

- 🍃 **Sustainable building management.** This concerns the choice of materials, technologies and consumption of resources used throughout the building's life cycle.
- 🍃 **Collection, reuse, recycling.** This theme can cover all business models in the process of collection, reuse and recycling of products and/or materials as well as rationalisation and efficiency of the resources used.
- 🍃 **Packaging and ecodesign.** It is good circular economy practice to make sustainable use of resources at different stages of the life cycle: replacing plastics with alternative materials, promoting biodegradable and compostable materials, reusing or recycling incoming and outgoing packaging materials can all contribute to increasing circularity.
- 🍃 **Supply chain.** Fundamental step in the implementation of a circular economy strategy is that of communication with stakeholders who supply materials and services to the organisation. Their procurement, following criteria consistent with circular economy principles, can be a multiplier factor of good practices; paths of analysis, awareness and involvement of stakeholders and suppliers can facilitate the stable implementation of such cases.

## INSPIRATIONAL AND OPERATIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

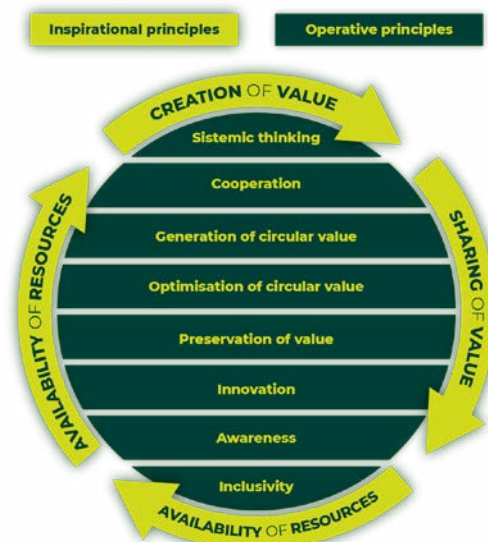


Figure 1 - Principles of inspiration, and operative aspects of the circular economy, UNI/TS 11820:2022



As a result, some areas for improvement have been identified that can be pursued in the medium term:

- 🍃 **Organise info-training activities** with staff and external stakeholders.
- 🍃 **Reduce and track waste** by optimising the use of resources.
- 🍃 **Donate materials** for recovery.
- 🍃 **Optimise** shipments.
- 🍃 **Reduce the use of material** resources, favouring secondary material resources<sup>1</sup>.
- 🍃 Pay attention to the **supply chain**, in particular **relations with suppliers** and **traceability of resources**.

The corporate strategy document on the circular economy is a starting point that will be implemented across UNI's various activities, from operational to strategic management, with regular monitoring of circularity data to enable increasingly sustainable and conscious decision-making.

<sup>1</sup> see UNI/TS 11820:2022 for definitions (secondary material resource: any reused residue).



Italian ISO and CEN member

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