

Brussels, 24 June 2026

CEI-Bois summary of EP ENVI public hearing: “Less Waste, More Value: Towards an EU Circular Economy Act”

On 23 June 2026, CEI-Bois followed the [European Parliament Environmental Committee’s public hearing “Less Waste, More Value: Towards an EU Circular Economy Act”](#), which brought together policymakers, industry representatives, NGOs, financial actors and circular economy experts to discuss expectations for the upcoming Circular Economy Act (CEA), expected later in 2026.

The 3-hour hearing focused on the role of circularity in strengthening European competitiveness, strategic autonomy and resource security, while reducing waste and dependence on imported raw materials.

What were the topics and who were the speakers?

The hearing was chaired by the EP ENVI Chair, MEP Pierfrancesco Maran, and was organised around two panels, each followed by MEP questions.

Panel 1 – The current legislative framework: lessons learnt and ways forward

Speakers:

- Janez Potočnik, Co-Chair, International Resource Panel (UNEP)
- Carsten Wachholz, Ellen MacArthur Foundation
- Josep Puxeu, President, Ecoembes
- Dr Marieke Hoffmann, Deutsche Umwelthilfe

The discussion focused on:

- Lessons from existing circular economy legislation;
- Regulatory fragmentation across the EU;
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR);
- Resource consumption and material footprint reduction;
- Secondary raw materials markets;
- Waste prevention, repair, reuse and recycling;
- Single market barriers.

Panel 2 – Supporting innovative approaches and delivering on implementation

Speakers:



- Catia Bastioli, CEO of Novamont and President of the Italian Circular Bioeconomy Cluster SPRING
- Emmanuel Katrakis, Galloo Group
- Hilde Sijbring, Dutch Banking Association
- Marie Castelli, Back Market

The discussion focused on:

- Scaling circular business models;
- Circular bioeconomy;
- Financing circular investments;
- Recycling markets;
- Reuse and refurbishment;
- Public procurement;
- Industrial competitiveness and implementation challenges.

The hearing concluded with remarks from Eric Mamer, Director-General for Environment at the European Commission.

Which sectors were in focus?

The sectors most frequently referenced were:

- Packaging;
- Textiles;
- Electronics and electrical equipment;
- Metals and plastics recycling;
- Critical raw materials;
- Waste management and recycling industries;
- Refurbishment and repair sectors;
- Bio-waste and organic waste management.

Construction was mentioned occasionally, mainly in relation to construction waste prevention targets, but it was not a major focus of the hearing.

Wood products and timber construction did not receive any direct attention.

Which issues and policy problems were addressed?

Several recurring challenges were identified:

- Fragmentation of the EU single market, particularly differing waste classifications and EPR systems;
- Lack of harmonised end-of-waste criteria;
- Weak demand for secondary raw materials;
- Higher costs of recycled materials compared with virgin materials;
- Insufficient investment certainty for circular business models;
- Dependence on imported raw materials and critical raw materials;
- Regulatory complexity and administrative burdens;



- Lack of incentives for reuse and repair;
- Difficulties scaling circular business models;
- Illegal imports and unfair competition from products entering the EU market under lower standards.

Many speakers argued that existing legislation has created important foundations but has not yet delivered a sufficiently functioning market for circular materials.

What was the main narrative behind the discussion on the circular economy transition?

A clear narrative emerged throughout the hearing: Circular economy is no longer viewed primarily as an environmental or waste-management policy. Instead, it is increasingly framed as an industrial, economic and geopolitical strategy.

Speakers repeatedly linked circularity to:

- European competitiveness;
- Strategic autonomy;
- Resource security;
- Reduced dependence on imports;
- Industrial resilience.

The dominant message was that Europe cannot compete globally through lower costs but can compete through innovation, quality, traceability, resource efficiency and circular business models.

Several speakers argued that circularity should become a core pillar of industrial policy rather than remain a subset of environmental policy.

Which possible solutions and tools were suggested?

Frequently mentioned tools included:

- Harmonisation of end-of-waste criteria;
- Harmonisation and simplification of EPR schemes;
- Expansion of digital product passports;
- Stronger public procurement requirements;
- Green VAT and fiscal incentives;
- Mandatory recycled-content requirements;
- Better data interoperability and traceability systems;
- Repair and reuse targets;
- Material footprint reduction targets;
- Support for secondary raw material markets;
- Faster permitting procedures for circular investments;
- Better access to finance for circular business models.

Several speakers also suggested stronger trade-policy instruments to ensure fair competition between EU circular products and imports.



What is the overall approach to the upcoming Circular Economy Act?

The overall approach presented during the hearing was pragmatic and market-oriented.

The future CEA is expected to:

- Strengthen the EU single market for circular materials;
- Create demand for secondary raw materials;
- Simplify regulatory barriers;
- Improve access to recycled feedstocks;
- Support competitiveness and strategic autonomy;
- Reduce dependency on imported critical raw materials.

The Commission presented the CEA as a framework that builds on existing legislation rather than replacing it.

What criticism was raised?

Different speakers raised different concerns.

Environmental organisations criticised:

- Excessive focus on recycling rather than prevention and reuse;
- Lack of binding resource-reduction targets;
- Insufficient attention to reducing overall material consumption.

Industry representatives criticised:

- Regulatory fragmentation;
- Administrative complexity;
- Lack of market demand for secondary materials;
- Insufficient investment certainty.

Several speakers warned against:

- Overregulation;
- Unrealistic targets;
- Inflationary impacts on consumers;
- Policies that increase compliance burdens without creating functioning markets.

A recurring criticism was that Europe has developed many rules but has not yet created the economic conditions needed for circular business models to scale.

Was circular construction a significant part of the discussion?

No, construction appeared only marginally throughout the hearing. The only notable references concerned construction waste prevention targets and general discussions about resource efficiency.

There was no dedicated discussion on:

- Circular construction;



- Building materials;
- Timber construction;
- Design for deconstruction;
- Building stock reuse.

Compared with textiles, electronics, packaging and critical raw materials, construction was clearly not a central theme of the hearing.

What was discussed on the bioeconomy?

The bioeconomy was discussed primarily by Catia Bastioli (Novamont / SPRING Cluster).

Key messages included:

- Circular economy should include biological as well as technical cycles;
- Biomass should be used efficiently and contribute to regenerating natural systems;
- Organic waste should become a resource rather than a waste stream;
- Separate collection of bio-waste should be strengthened;
- Bio-based residues should be better valorised;
- Regulatory barriers often prevent bio-based materials from reaching the market;
- The EU needs stronger support for integrated territorial bioeconomy projects;
- Bioeconomy should be embedded across multiple policy frameworks, including the Circular Economy Act, Bioeconomy Strategy, Industrial policy and Critical Raw Materials policy.

Importantly, **there was no discussion of wood or wood products**. Although biomass and bio-based materials were mentioned, references remained generic. No speaker highlighted wood products, timber construction, cascading use of wood, forest-based industries or wood value chains as specific examples of circular bioeconomy solutions. The bioeconomy discussion therefore remained largely focused on bio-waste, organic waste management, biochemicals and broader biomass valorisation.

What did the Commission communicate?

In his concluding remarks, Environment Director-General Eric Mamer outlined the Commission's current thinking on the Circular Economy Act.

The Commission emphasised that:

- The Act will be proposed later in 2026;
- Europe is not starting from scratch, as substantial legislation already exists (ESPR, Batteries Regulation, Packaging Regulation, Waste Framework legislation and EPR systems);
- More action is nevertheless needed to unlock circular markets.

The Commission identified three main objectives:

- Simplifying regulatory barriers and improving the functioning of the single market.
- Strengthening circular markets and access to secondary raw materials.
- Reducing EU dependence on imported critical raw materials.



Planned measures mentioned included:

- Harmonisation, simplification and digitalisation of EPR systems;
- Easier movement of secondary materials across borders;
- End-of-waste criteria improvements;
- Measures to stimulate both supply and demand for secondary feedstocks;
- Revision of WEEE rules to improve recovery of critical raw materials from electronics.

The Commission repeatedly emphasised that the Circular Economy Act should create economic value, support competitiveness and deliver practical results on the ground while contributing to environmental objectives.