

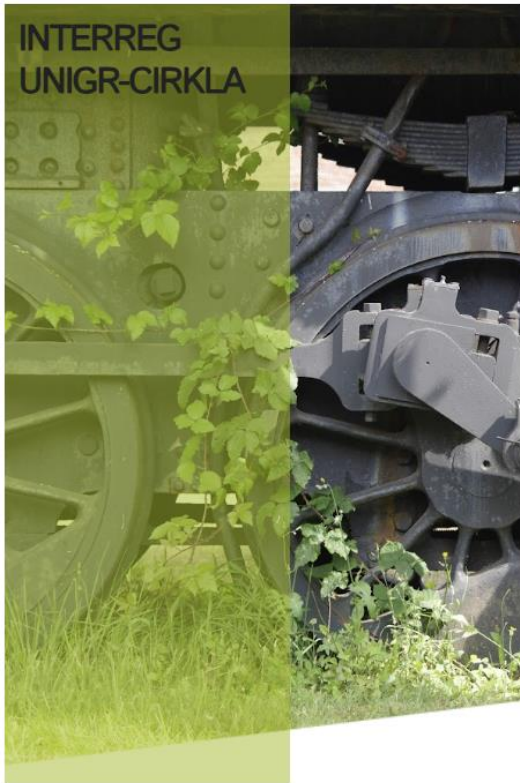
UniGR-CIRKLA

- Press Release -

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UniGR-CIRKLA: a second centre of expertise for the transition to a circular economy of materials and metals.

Coordinated by the University of Liège, the project aims to continue to position the Greater Region as a European model for the efficient management of technological resources and waste.

The University of the Greater Region (UniGR), through its UniGR-CIRKLA initiative - which aims to develop a comprehensive portfolio of training, research and innovation projects in the circular economy sector - has just been awarded significant funding from the Interreg VI Greater Region programme for the establishment of a second centre of expertise dedicated to the transition to a circular economy of materials and metals. Coordinated by the University of Liège, the UniGR-CIRKLA project aims to continue to position the Greater Region as a European model for the efficient management of critical raw material to recover from technological resources and waste.



The transition to a circular economy in the Greater Region is an ambitious project aimed at bringing together various stakeholders to promote a more sustainable economic model. This strategic initiative revolves around three main axes: society, territory and innovation, all interconnected to promote increased circularity of materials and metals. By building on cross-border synergies and strengthening smart specialisation strategies, the Greater Region aims to become a leading example in the heart of Europe in terms of resource and waste management.

1. Society - Raising awareness and involving

- Organization of a “circular road show”
- Executive-Education program dedicated to the circular economy
- Summer School on Entrepreneurship in the circular economy

As part of this transition, several actions have been planned to raise awareness and actively involve society in this process. The organization of a travelling exhibition that aims to educate young people on the entire life cycle of manufactured products, from their extraction to their disposal. The establishment of an Executive Education programme dedicated to the circular economy will provide companies and students with high-level training, complemented by seminars and visits. Finally, a summer school on entrepreneurship in the circular economy will stimulate innovation by encouraging PhD students to take on multidisciplinary challenges in collaboration with industrial partners.

2. Territory - Fostering circularity

- Buildings as a material bank
- Material Flow Mapping
- Repair, Reuse & Recycling Centers

To promote circularity at the territorial level, concrete actions are proposed. The transformation of buildings into material banks will make it possible to plan the reuse and recycling of the materials used from the design stage. Similarly, mapping steel flows in the region will facilitate the development of cross-border collection and sorting strategies, thus minimizing environmental impact. In addition, the establishment of repair, reuse and recycling centres will encourage the collection and repair of electrical and electronic devices before they are recycled, while promoting citizen repair initiatives.

3. Innovation - Promoting innovation

- Creation of a knowledge center
- Cross-border incubation community

Finally, to promote innovation and intelligence in the transition to a circular economy, specific actions are proposed. The creation of a knowledge hub will provide a centralized access point to expertise and resources in the field of the circular economy of technological materials. In addition, the cross-border incubation will offer opportunities for project leaders and investors to meet, thus promoting the development of innovative solutions in the Greater Region.

A Holistic approach

The transition to a circular economy in the Greater Region is based on a holistic approach involving society, territory and innovation. By joining forces, the region's stakeholders aspire to transform their territory into an exemplary model of sustainability and efficient resource management, thus contributing to the construction of a more environmentally friendly future.

Eric Pirard, Professor of Mineral Resources, has supported the project from its conception and notes that "The Greater Region is ideally situated to play a pioneering role in the sustainable design of materials and in the deployment of a circular economy across borders".

A cross-border, academic and industrial partnership

The UniGR-CIRKLA project covers the historical regions of the mining and steel basin of central Europe: Lorraine, Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate, Luxembourg and Wallonia. It brings together centuries-old know-how in metals and minerals processing and management with 7 universities and 1 industrial research centre. They are surrounded with more than twenty 20 major players from industry, society and politics.

The UniGR-CIRKLA project brings together eight project partners:

- University of Liège (lead partner)
- CRITT TJFU (Centre de Recherche d'Innovation et de Transfert de Technologie en Techniques Jet Fluide et Usinage)
- Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft des Saarlandes
- RPTU Kaiserslautern-Landau
- Saarland University
- Trier University
- UniGR a.s.b.l.
- Université de Lorraine
- University of Luxembourg

And twenty associated partners:

Belgium:

- INTRADEL
- Maison de la Métallurgie et de l'Industrie de Liège asbl
- Pole MecaTech

Germany:

- A.R.T. Zweckverband
- Bauforum Rheinland-Pfalz
- East Side Fab e.V.
- greenable GmbH
- Ministerium für Klimaschutz, Umwelt, Energie und Mobilität (MKUEM) Rheinland-Pfalz
- Ministerium der Finanzen Rheinland-Pfalz
- Peter Gross Bau
- saarland.innovation&standort (saaris) e.V.
- Science and Innovation Alliance Kaiserslautern e.V.
- SHS – Stahl-Holding-Saar GmbH & Co. KGaA
- Steinbeis Forschungszentrum „Material Engineering Center Saarland“
- Weltkulturerbe Völklinger Hütte - Europäisches Zentrum für Kunst- und Industriekultur GmbH

France:

- EIT Raw Materials CLC Central
- Interfaces EURODEV CENTER
- XARDEL DEMOLITION

Luxembourg:

- SOLID S.A.
- Technoport S.A.

Support and funding

- Interreg Grande Région
- Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Innovation, Digitales und Energie Saarland
- Région Wallonne

The project, which officially started on 1 April 2024, will run for a period of four years during which activities will be supported by the Interreg VIA Greater Region programme and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Further co-financing will be provided by the Walloon Region and the Saarland Ministry of Economy, Innovation, Digital Affairs and Energy (MWIDE). The total budget of the UniGR-CIRKLA project is €6,571,654.00.

Learn more: <https://interreg-gr.eu/project/unigrckla-fr/>

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About the University of the Greater Region (UniGR)

The University of the Greater Region is an innovative university alliance with the following universities: Kaiserslautern-Landau (D), Liège (B), Lorraine (F), Luxembourg (LU), Saarland (D), Trier (D) and htw saar (D) as an associate partner. Cooperation between the seven higher education and research institutions of the Greater Region began in 2008 as part of a European project. Since 2015, the group has had its own legal structure that allows it to carry out projects for the benefit of its members and to ensure joint coordination of cooperation.

The main objective of the UniGR is to train generations of convinced Europeans by creating conditions for study and research based on mobility between partner universities, between scientific disciplines and language proficiency.

The UniGR is also developing its international profile by focusing on targeted areas to respond to certain territorial and societal challenges in the Greater Region. This specialization is characterized in the form of "Interdisciplinary Centers of Expertise". The UniGR-Center for Border Studies, which specialises in border studies, is the first interdisciplinary centre of expertise. Its second centre "UniGR-CIRKLA" is dedicated to metals and materials in a circular economy.

Website: <https://www.uni-gr.eu/en>

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