



Final
evaluation



FINAL EVALUATION
CIRCULAR ECONOMY SWITZERLAND
2018-2022

11.10.2022

1. INTRODUCTION

The Circular Economy programme emerged against the backdrop of mounting pressure to find solutions to climate change and the unsustainable use of resources. Global developments in recent years have highlighted the problem of dependency on international supply chains. A circular economy reduces risks associated with this reliance, and fosters regional value creation and job creation in Switzerland.

With financial support from the MAVA Foundation and Migros Pioneer Fund, in 2018, we pooled numerous circular economy initiatives to generate more impact. And in a spirit of 'co-opetition', we sought to foster mutual learning, a coordinated, efficient approach, and tangible market impact. This led to the birth of the Circular Economy Switzerland (CES) movement.

Through CES, we have brought together projects and stakeholders who are enthusiastic about the circular economy. Our connected projects should now continue to operate in a competitive market environment. We see the economy as a partner and key driver of change. And the potential involvement of all relevant political movements and the entire economy in the pursuit of circularity remains an important goal.

OBJECTIVES

- Raise awareness about the circular economy approach amongst key economic and political stakeholders as well as amongst the general public.
- Provide real impetus for transition to a circular economy in Switzerland and show the way through flagship projects.
- Support selected industrial and service sectors in developing circular products and services.
- Stimulate demand for circular products and services amongst private and public sector stakeholders.
- Improve policy and legal frameworks so that transition to a circular economy in Switzerland can take place swiftly.
- Contribute to reinforce Switzerland's position in the international arena as a leader in innovation.

BUDGET ENGAGED

CHF
8,185,541

THE PARTNERSHIP

sanu durabilitas
fondation pour le développement durable
stiftung für nachhaltige entwicklung



 **SWISS SUSTAINABILITY FORUM**

Pytec
Circular

IMPACT HUB Switzerland

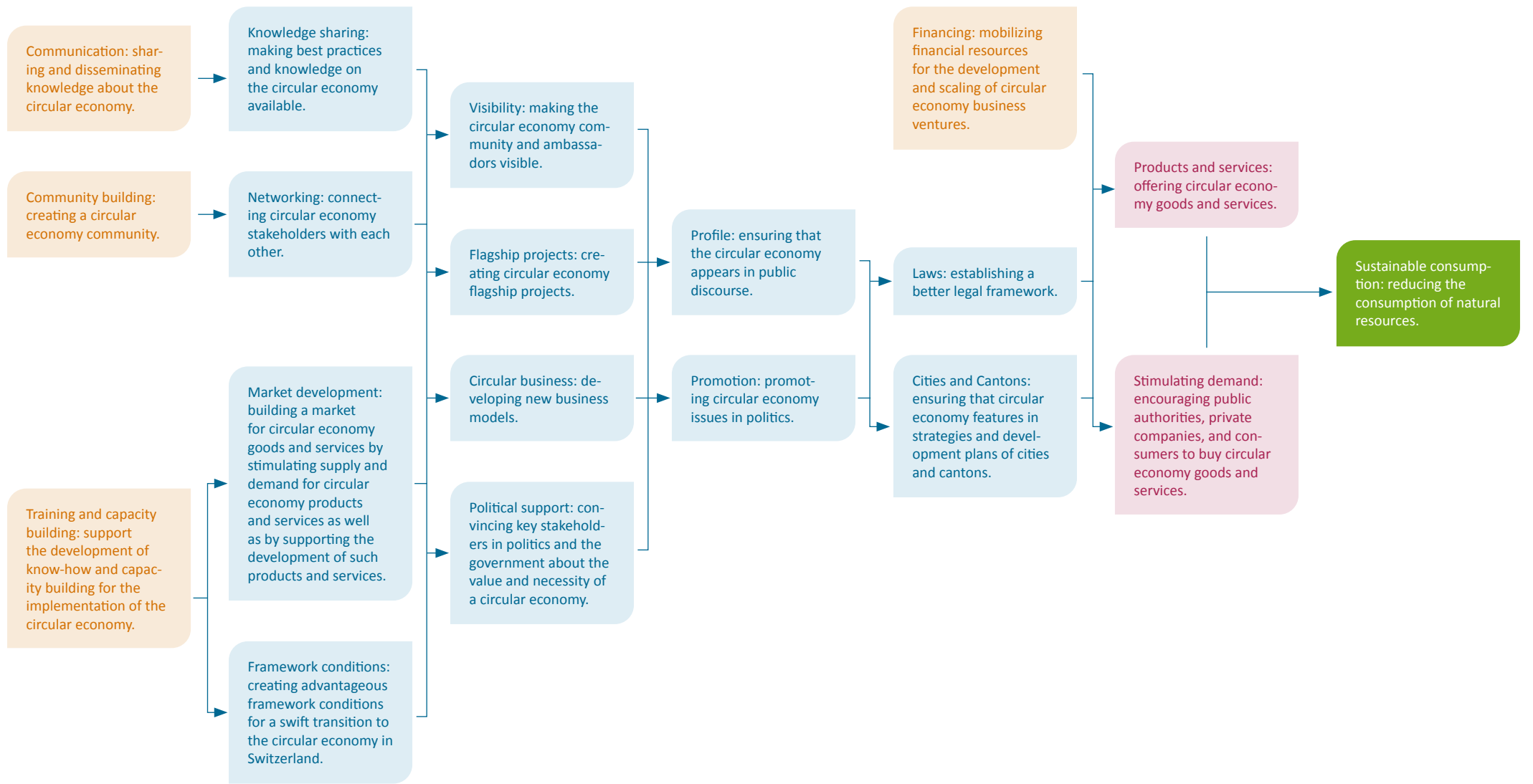
ecos

SHIFT 
SWITZERLAND

 **Circular Economy Switzerland**

Der Verband für nachhaltiges Wirtschaften
öbu

 **Prozirkula**
Rechenzentrum für die Kreislaufwirtschaft
Centre de compétence pour la économie à déchet-circulaire
Centro de competência per gli appalti edili circolari



2. PROGRESS AND ACTIVITIES

First, building on existing standalone projects, we worked to develop a common understanding of the circular economy in Switzerland. To this end, a collaborative model of 'co-opetition' was established, enabling synergies between otherwise independent projects. At the same time, we put together a comprehensive plan for transition to a circular economy in Switzerland. We are now working with our partners to further bolster external impact.

Our aspiration to find solutions that go beyond an individual and enterprise level has proven to be compelling, with over 300 signatories to the CES charter and impetus for change in a community that is set to grow massively in the future. And our projects demonstrate that cooperation across an entire value chain does indeed work.

Our communication efforts have been successful and will continue. And although there are still only a few products and services on the market that are truly circular, we have managed to support enterprises and public bodies on their journey toward circularity and to give them a platform. Stimulating a growing market, CES wants to continue building bridges between enterprises, the public sector, and investors.

STRATEGY 1: COMMUNICATIONS AND CAMPAIGNING FOR THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Through active communication we promoted circular economy in Switzerland and CES served as a contact point for various stakeholders and offered an overview of circular economy activities in Switzerland.

Our activities included:

- identifying Circular Economy Ambassadors;
- building the Circular Economy Knowledge Hub website, including information on the circular economy, examples of best practice and ongoing projects;
- sharing CES' basic political demands through a communication campaign.

STRATEGY 2: COMMUNITY BUILDING, EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES AND COMMUNICATION

We sought to bring stakeholders in the Swiss circular economy together in a community. Our activities included:

- formally establishing Circular Economy Switzerland (CES) as an association and central hub for stakeholders promoting circular economy in Switzerland;
- organising events and workshops to provide opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing;
- providing a space for stakeholders to share ideas and practical experience.

STRATEGY 3: DEVELOPING SUPPLY AND DEMAND, DEVELOPING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY MARKETPLACE

We worked to build demand in the private and public sectors simultaneously, and create a marketplace where supply and demand could meet. Our activities included:

- supporting CES members, partners and allies to advise the public sector on sustainable procurement, with a special focus on circularity;
- encouraging enterprises to demand more circular raw materials and products for their production and services;
- assisting CES members to develop marketing strategies and flagship projects to convince consumers about the need for circularity and persuade them to buy circular products and services;
- supporting CES members to organise trade fairs and events that served as a marketplace for circular economy suppliers and buyers;
- supporting projects that promote demand for circular solutions (furniture, household appliances, work clothing, food) and develop supply (start-ups in the Circular Economy Transition);
- establishing new platforms that bring together supply and demand (e.g., for steel beams).

STRATEGY 4: CREATING GOOD FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS FOR A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

We worked to remove existing barriers and establish new incentives to accelerate the transition to a circular economy in Switzerland through policy analysis, policy development, and policy advocacy at all levels of government (national, cantonal and municipal/city). Our activities included:

- publishing policy guidance on key elements of a circular economy and formulating positions on parliamentary affairs such as a model statement on the proposed revision of the Environmental Protection Act for strengthening the circular economy;
- providing science-based expertise on circular economy matters to policymakers;
- broadening political support for strengthening framework conditions for a circular economy through, for example, policy roundtables with select decision-makers from political, administrative, business, and scientific circles.

STRATEGY 5: SUSTAINABILITY AND PARTNERSHIP

To identify new potential donors and secure future funding, our activities included:

- developing a bycatch action plan;
- developing and submitting funding proposals;
- establishing a framework to coordinate the partnership.

STRATEGY 6: TRAINING AND CAPACITY-BUILDING

We offered workshops, training courses, and further training on various topics via partners and existing networks, helping existing training organizations to build their circular economy capacity and tools.

STRATEGY 7: FOSTERING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY THROUGH FINANCING

We supported the development of suitable insurance, financial, and financing approaches to establish new circular economy business models, services, and products in the market, including by publishing a CES White paper on cash flow management in the circular economy.

KEY LESSONS

1. In order to be able to convince the outside world, we had to first build up our own knowledge.
2. Political initiatives on circular economy need professional support by experts in the field. A movement like CES needs a structure that coordinates certain tasks and integrates new stakeholders. At the same time, the movement must be accessible and flexible enough to ensure that it grows and can amplify impact beyond the centre.
3. Radical innovation is not always necessary, and traditional routes to market with established stakeholders can also prove effective.
4. Soft factors such as understanding amongst stakeholders are as important for the implementation of a circular economy as technical innovation.
5. Market demand will mobilise financial sector support but currently there seems to be little demand for new financial instruments that serve circular economy.
6. One of the decisive factors for developing circular economy in Switzerland is for CES to be able to tap into the strengths and expertise of our members as well as those of other stakeholders in the circular economy ecosystem, and then jointly develop core areas of work to strengthen that ecosystem.
7. Surprisingly, when it came to shaping procurement (e.g., for steel beams, work clothes, food), it took more effort and time to shift the private than the public sector.

3. ACHIEVEMENTS AND IMPACTS

- **Communication:** CES has become a key hub for circular economy issues. Through public appearances, CES has won over key stakeholders in the circular economy and helped to change attitudes. Public interest in the topic of the circular economy has increased and the issue is regularly taken up by the media. Large-scale outreach efforts were successfully undertaken through CES communication channels and organized events.
- **Community:** 330 stakeholders in the Swiss circular economy have signed the CES charter and together make up a formidable community. New partnerships arose from the exchange of knowledge and experience between CES stakeholders. Knowledge products and public outreach with partners have stimulated discourse and shone a light on new aspects of the circular economy.
- **Framework conditions:** Awareness was raised amongst influential politicians and a new parliamentary group was set up. The main concerns of CES members were effectively fed into the political process on the revision of the Environmental Protection Act, and broad support was mobilized with the help of a model statement outlining our position. A coalition of environmental and consumer protection organizations, trade associations, unions and CES members was formed to strengthen the right to repair.
- **Market:** Through project work, public tenders for, inter alia, office furniture, solar panels, ICT equipment, and vehicles were created. The implementation of the concept 'product as a service' in public procurement is also being examined in terms of applicability. In the private sector, project alliances forged in the areas of work garments, household appliances and **steel beams** ensure industry awareness. In the gastronomy sector, local events were used to show how traditional menus can be reinterpreted with local restaurants and their suppliers in a new, regional, and circular way.

On the supply side, stakeholders along the value chain have joined forces to form the **Mattress Alliance** in order to initiate recycling and establish a market for recycled material, which, in turn, will flow into the design of circular mattresses. Over **150 young entrepreneurs** were supported in developing the launch of their circular economy products and services, as well as **50 others in their scaling** thanks to strategic partnerships with well-established stakeholders from private and the public sectors. Various pilot projects have demonstrated the feasibility of circular design.

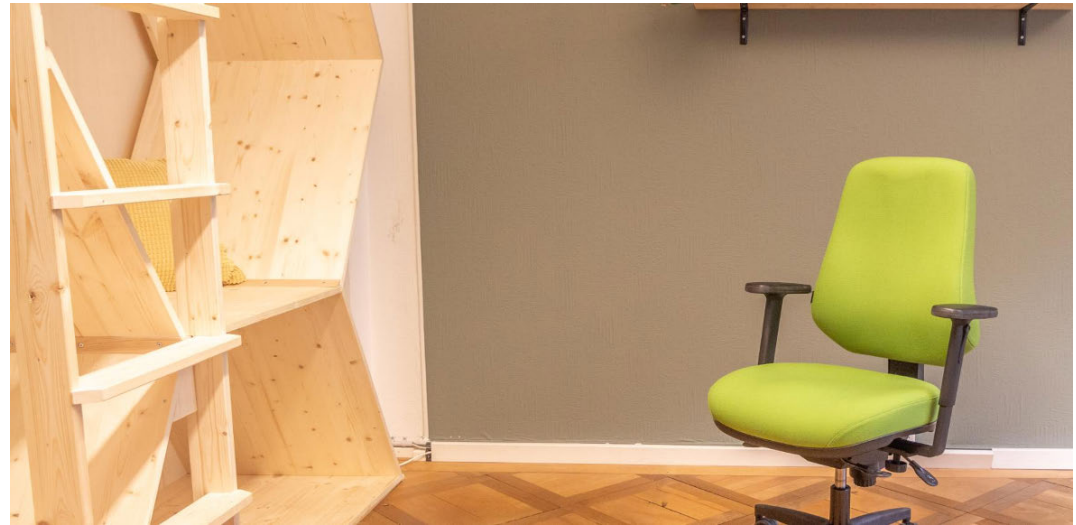
- **Training:** Through further training activities in over 50 workshops, we enhanced economic stakeholders' specialist knowledge of the circular economy.

KEY LESSONS

1. Bringing together stakeholders from across the whole value chain and letting them develop solutions jointly works well.
2. Creating inspiring mechanisms for co-creation such as conferences, workshops, meetings to exchange experiences can be very effective.
3. 'Co-opetition' as an approach in which each stakeholder is free to overtake competitors is a strong driver of innovation in the circular economy.
4. Knowledge transfer and sharing templates and patterns that have already been created can be adapted for use with other cantons, sectors, and products to scale impact.
5. Sometimes it is beneficial to use a more 'generous' or watered-down definition of circular economy to create interest, and only go into detail at a later stage.
6. Spotlights on flagship projects such as Circular Heroes show that the circular economy is already happening and functioning.
7. To get SMEs on board with the circular economy, a project must be very sector-specific and bring clear benefits to an enterprise - general circular economy communication is not sufficient.
8. Decarbonization of the economy is an important concern, and SMEs tend to prioritize this over pursuit of the circular economy, and there is still a lack of awareness that these two topics are closely linked.

CASE STUDY 1: STIMULATING CIRCULARITY THROUGH DEMAND

In 2022, the canton of Zurich crafted and implemented a *framework agreement for standard furniture* in its procurement policy with [Prozirkula](#). Aspects of the circular economy were introduced as part of a set of criteria for future public tendering processes. These included elements such as systematic refurbishment and upgrading of office furniture; residual value remuneration for said furniture; and the obligation for suppliers to provide evidence of their own progress on circular economy after a period of three years. This is both a new, scalable procurement approach for the public sector, and an example of how public procurement can serve as an enabler for transition to the circular economy. The approach also has the potential to avoid 500 tonnes of furniture waste that the canton produces annually. Circular approaches such as reusing, renting, repairing, and recycling are effective and resource-saving ways to reduce mountains of waste. The [Make Furniture Circular initiative](#), supported by the [Migros Pioneer Fund](#), worked with various stakeholders to develop pilot products such as the [Cloud Sofa](#) that explore the potential of the circular economy in the furniture sector. And findings were summarized in a [Rethinking Guide](#) intended to support circular economy transformation processes in other industries.



©pusch.ch

CASE STUDY 2: RE-USE OF STEEL SECTIONS (RUSS)

The construction industry is responsible for 35% of CO2 emissions in Switzerland. The re-use of steel beams can make an important contribution to reducing these emissions, and due to standardization and the consistent properties of steel, offers a practical and realisable opportunity.

The project, managed by öbu-Verband für nachhaltige Wirtschaften, which currently has 19 partners, is developing a circular business model for the re-use of steel that can then also be applied to other building components.

First, we sought to raise awareness amongst relevant stakeholders. And at the same time, we identified key challenges such as digitalization, quality assurance, integration of re-used steel in building standards, and sustainability criteria for the construction industry.

One key focus was the development of a digital platform bringing supply and demand together, and qualified industry partners are now on board to implement digitalization and ensure quality control.

The level of support that we experienced during pilot project implementation shows that demand exceeds supply. And we are now looking for additional sources of steel beams, including in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and in the Canton of Ticino.

We need at least two more years to deliver on projects goals, and the search for additional funding has begun.



Re-Use of Steel Sections (RUSS)

4. WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT

Since its launch in 2019, the Circular Economy Switzerland movement has really boosted the profile of circularity in the country. There is no avoiding the topic for stakeholders in economic, political and administrative roles. And consumers are beginning to change their habits and adopt new behaviours that enable a circular economy.

While continuing to serve its members and represent their interests, CES now wants to evolve into a more dynamic and proactive force that accelerates the transition to a circular economy in Switzerland.

Our ongoing strategy process focuses on four areas: Mindset and Movement, Market Development, Legislation and Regulation, and Education and Research. For each of these, CES will create space for exchange, learning, and innovation, from which new activities and engagement emerge.

We are also developing the first Swiss roadmap for a circular economy that will become a North Star guiding our future work. In the process, we are involving new, important stakeholders who we are encouraging to become active in its implementation.

Beyond CES' collaborative work, partner organisations will continue delivering their own projects, supported either through existing funds or through securing additional funding. Together, these activities will scale our collective and individual impact as the circular economy transformation in Switzerland accelerates and becomes a reality.

“Circular Economy is about 5 Rs. It's far more than just Recycling. To retain maximum value in our value chains, we also need to completely Redesign products and the entire economic system so that we can increase Reuse, Repair, and Refurbishment.”

Marco Grossmann, ecos

“Combined with digitalisation, the push for a circular economy in Switzerland will open up opportunities for business model innovation, and could make the country a centre of excellence in circularity.”

CES, executive committee

