The Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) is a sustainability think tank. Working with stakeholders across EU institutions, international bodies, academia, civil society and industry, our team of policy professionals composed of economists, scientists and lawyers produces evidence-based research and policy insights.

Our work spans nine research areas and covers both short-term policy issues and long-term strategic studies. As a non-for-profit organisation with over 40-years of experience, we are committed to advancing impact-driven sustainability policy across the EU and the world.

The following are key examples of the work undertaken by our Low-carbon Circular Economy Programme in recent years. For more information about IEEP, visit www.ieep.eu or follow us on Twitter @IEEP_eu and LinkedIn.
Circular economy, industrial pollution & waste

IEEP has been at the forefront of circular economy innovation for more than 20 years, with our focus on resource efficiency, the green economy, bio-economy and sustainable development.

In the last decade, we have been working to identify realistic policy instruments that can aid the transition to a circular economy, focusing our work on the means of increasing circularity in specific value chains like plastics and biomass.

We are also developing knowledge on policies and strategies to address unsustainable consumption more broadly, in a way that allows for a reduction of overall material footprint in absolute terms.

We also have expertise in industrial pollution control, eco-innovation and wider industrial management issues.

Our work on waste includes reviewing and proposing improvements to existing EU policy and law and Member State equivalents.

Our most recent contributions on these topics include:

Organising an event on delivering a more circular economy through the European Green Deal at the European Parliament together with the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research (Mistra) and Stockholm Environment Institute on policy solutions for high-impact sectors such as textiles (December 2019).

Influencing the debate on the role of resource demand and consumption in delivering a more circular economy, including an analysis of the new EU Circular Economy Action Plan from a consumption perspective, in collaboration with Stockholm Environment Institute and the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research.

Working with national regulators to identify best practices in the promotion of circular economy, including in the project Aligning Fiscal Policy with the Circular

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Economy Roadmap in Finland. We have strong experience in the links between eco-innovation and circular economy developments and the policy and regulatory decision-making that both facilitates and implements these issues. In particular, we recently co-authored guidance for regulators on enabling innovations for the circular economy (funded by the Dutch, Swedish and UK governments).

Circular plastics, including producing the background paper for the 2018 OECD Global Forum on Environment: Plastics in a Circular Economy. Designing sustainable plastics from a chemicals perspective. We are currently contributing to a study for the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre to support the Circular Plastics Alliance in preparing a work plan to develop guidelines for design for recycling.

Our work as co-chair of the circular economy working group, which had high visibility at the Think Tank 20 Summit in Berlin, including our briefing on Circular economy measures to keep plastics and their value in the economy. Some of our recommendations were taken up by the G20, as part the G20’s resource efficiency dialogue and marine litter action plan.

Reviews and assessments of elements of the EU circular economy policy and waste acquis, including EU waste Directives, the Waste Shipment Regulation and the Thematic Strategy on Waste Prevention and Recycling as well as how it interactions with other policy areas, such as industrial policy.
IEEP has a long track record of research on climate mitigation and adaptation policies, and on decarbonisation of Europe’s energy systems.

We have also carried out extensive work on the EU framework for delivering climate and energy targets for 2030, decarbonising agriculture, and on successful approaches to energy efficiency and renewables policy and on climate mainstreaming of Europe’s budget.

Our work also addresses sustainable urbanisation, including climate adaptation, socio-economic benefits of environmental protection, cities as circular economy hubs, renewable energy for cities and measuring urban sustainability.

Our most recent contributions on this topic include:

Extensive work on climate mainstreaming. Included preparing a study for the European Parliament’s Budget Committee on options for improving the tracking of climate and biodiversity related spending in the EU budget, and a study proposing options and evaluating the existing system for the European Commission.

A study to support the European Commission’s DG CLIMA evaluation of the EU Adaptation Strategy in anticipation of the proposed revision of the strategy.

In-depth analysis of the use of biofuels and bioenergy in selected Member States for NGOs, including information on market operators, capacities, and policy evolution.

Research into the best ways of operationalising the European Green Deal while taking climate justice into account, building on a background paper on climate justice prepared for the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019.

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An analysis of the degree to which circular economy has been taken into account in climate mitigation planning internationally, the potential for circular economy in climate mitigation, and technical and political barriers to its inclusion in climate mitigation strategies.

A focus on foreign and security policy implications of climate change and other environmental pressures, including in a Think 2030 paper on reinforcing the environmental dimensions of EU foreign and security policy.

Support to DG CLIMA for the evaluation and analysis of Member State Long Term Strategies following their submission in 2020.

A study on cohesion Policy and Paris Agreement Targets prepared by IEEP for the European Parliament’s REGI Committee examined the experience of climate mainstreaming in Cohesion Policy in the current and previous programming periods and assessed the implications of the Paris Agreement.

A major evaluation for the European Commission’s DG AGRI of climate impacts of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy.

A project for DG CLIMA on LULUCF (land use, land use change, and forestry) activities in Member States.

A sectoral assessment on the potential for carbon pricing options in UK agriculture.
Tax reform & economic instruments

IEEP has been deeply engaged in studies seeking to make better use of market-based instruments to incentivise improved resource efficiency and innovation, a reduction in environmental pressures, improve public health and ecosystem resilience while taking into account jobs, competitiveness and growth.

Our most recent contributions on this topic include:

- A major ongoing project on environmental taxation and budgetary reform for DG ENV, where one of five themes is ‘resources and circular economy’.

  The project builds on a previous study for DG ENV, also led by IEEP, which aimed at capacity building of civil society to engage with environmental tax and subsidy reform. We have also worked for the Pacific Community on greener taxes and subsidies in Pacific Island Countries and Territories.

- Leading a project on designing extended producer responsibility schemes to incentivise eco-design in the context of circular economy, focusing on plastic packaging and building on IEEP’s previous strong track record of analysing the design of EPR schemes.

  Our work on this topic allowed us to engage in the debate both at the 2019 Waste & Resource Network Denmark (DAKOFA) conference in Copenhagen, at the 2019 International Symposium of Food Innovation and Development (Innova) in Montevideo, Uruguay and the 2019 ISEE Conference in Korea.

- Working with national regulators to identify best practices in the promotion of circular economy, for example, in the project ‘Aligning Fiscal Policy with the Circular Economy Roadmap in Finland, for the Finnish Innovation Fund (Sitra).

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Innovation for sustainability

We have strong experience in the links between eco-innovation and circular economy developments and the policy and regulatory decision-making that both facilitates and implements these issues.

Our work has focused on the concept of innovation for sustainability; regulatory opportunities and barriers to support eco-innovation; and how innovation funding polices can support the realisation of the SDGs.

Our most recent contributions on this topic include:

- IEEP is currently supporting the work of the ESIR high-level expert group on innovation for sustainability at the Directorate General for Research and Innovation.


The project aims to identify concrete opportunities to improve the quality of EU environmental law and thus help to achieve the benefits associated with the law while delivering a more level playing field across the EU.

It has helped establish a more coherent and consistent framework for the EU environmental acquis through developing drafting principles on the use of cross-cutting instruments and procedures in EU environmental directives and regulations. Its most recent outcome was to produce guidelines for regulators on eco-innovation.

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Trade, SDGs & external policies

Our expertise focuses on rethinking trade instruments as part the green deal, with circular economy as one of our key focal areas.

Exploring the links between trade and the circular economy, including in a 2019 project for the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and by hosting events at the WTO public forum in Geneva (Oct 2018) and the World Circular Economy Forum in Helsinki (June 2019).

We are playing a key role in discussing what the new EU Circular Economy Action Plan means for international trade, including discussing the matter at the 2020 Circular Economy Symposium at Harvard (March 2020, see here), in a live-stream discussion with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (March 2020) and at an online conference by Chatham House (April 2020).

Exploring how the circular economy model could support the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in third countries, e.g. by organising a stakeholder meeting on the topic at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) together with UNIDO and the European Investment Bank.

We have also written a report contributing to the expert working group on Green and Circular Economy in the EU Outermost Regions.

Considering the consequences of circular economy policies on the distribution of resources for marginal groups and developing countries, in particular in discussion with the UN International Resource Panel.

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Our partners, clients and funders

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- WWF
- KOREA Foundation
- EU Member States Governments
- The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research

Institute for European Environmental Policy
Our strategy for 2020-2022

The core aim of IEEP’s Low-carbon Circular Economy Programme in 2020-2022 will be to translate into action Europe’s vision for a low-carbon and circular economy through an ambitious green deal and the post-2020 agenda aligned with SDGs.

This would require for the EU and key member states to take additional, effective and adequate policy measures and implementation strategies that seek to address key challenges, for which current trends are incompatible with circular economy and carbon neutrality objectives, including:

- Far too slow progress on decarbonisation, with worrying trends in key sectors like transportation and energy efficiency.
- Lack of improvement of key consumption-based indicators, including waste generation, material footprint per capita and energy consumption by households.

Policy objectives


2. Making the EU the engine of innovation for sustainability.

3. Changing the terms of debate regarding Europe’s consumption patterns.

Model of change

The first 18 months of the new European Commission will be particularly key to ensure that Europe’s new sustainability agenda (including the Green Deal and beyond) is fully aligned to science and SDGs.

IEEP’s priorities will be shaped by a number of policy change opportunities, including the presidencies of the EU (with a special emphasis on the 2020 German and 2021 French Presidencies, given our membership and issues likely to be on the agenda), relevant EU policy processes (see Annex), relevant MS processes (NECPs, LTS plans) as well as key international events (UNFCCC COP26 and 27) and other forthcoming developments in the post-2020 legislative and regulatory agenda of the EU.

We will also take into account potential tipping points, including:

- Innovation and technology: Innovation within the transport and the energy sectors are changing price signals and therefore investment flows. This should continue in the next foreseeable period, making divestment from fossil fuels and thermal vehicles likelier, though low oil prices might act as disincentives to change.
- Consumers’ practices: There are now numerous examples of changing consumer practices, including a change of diet, expectations around animal health, which industry is starting to pick up and react to, changing strategy and supply chain policies.
• Financial and economic crisis, which is highly likely for 2020 because of the coronavirus and which could derail the green deal agenda or open new opportunities linked with debates about the nature of recovery strategies, a new openness of the public to change behaviours and a new legitimacy for the state to regulate the economy.

Our unique selling proposition

Our role will vary according to the specific policy, our added value and expertise and the timing with the policy cycle:

• **Generator of knowledge for change:** All our low-carbon, circular economy research projects deliver high-quality, policy-relevant evidence which informs key policy debates and contributes to greater evidence-based policy making in Europe on low-carbon and circular economy issues.

• **Trusted adviser:** IEEP continues to provide trusted advice on low-carbon, circular economy issues with European institutions, NGOs, MS and increasingly the private sector.

• **Broker:** IEEP uses its stellar reputation in terms of the interdependence of its research and its integrity to broker difficult conversations between industry, civil society and other key stakeholders involved in low-carbon, circular economy policy debates.

• **Multiplier:** IEEP uses its think tank network Think Sustainable Europe and the Think2030 community to inform and disseminate evidenced-based policy recommendations regarding EU’s low-carbon, circular economy policy design and implementation.

• **Capacity builder:** IEEP provides training for, and relevant information to, relevant stakeholders in Brussels and in Member States (businesses, local authorities, NGOs), on low-carbon, circular economy policy issues (policy design and implementation).

• **Awareness raiser:** making better communications use of our work to spark wider interest in finding answers to low-carbon, circular economy challenges at the European scale, including through interventions in national policy debates to draw attention to the European dimension of the problems and solutions.

Channels

Our network of sustainability think tanks – **Think Sustainable Europe** – consists of IEEP Members (IDDRI, SEI, Ecologic and TMG), which will support IEEP’s work by reaching out to their government and stakeholders, organising events with IEEP at Member State level and disseminating outcomes in their respective media markets. They will also support the recruitment of new members to IEEP, helping us to select the right players in a diverse set of Member States.

IEEP will work with **Think2030 partners** (including Globe EU, IDDRI, TMG, SEI, Ecologic, E3G, EEB, CMCC, GMAC, Aldersgate, EYF, EEAC, ECERA, IUCN, Bee Group, Platforma, DSM, ISP, Reloop) and the wider **Think2030 community** (100 policy experts from across Europe) to write, review and test the conclusions of policy.
papers to be presented at the second conference of Think2030. They will also be asked to contribute to dissemination actions.

IEEP is member of The Climate Action Network Europe (as an observing member). We will use this channel to consult with, and where appropriate build the capacity of civil society working on climate change for our work on several areas including Area 1, 2, 3 and 4. We also have relationships with many NGOs including EEB, BirdLife Europe, WWF, and Zero Waste Europe. We will use these partnerships for consultation and dissemination, including at Member State level.

Research partners: IEEP works with hundreds of research partners throughout the year to deliver its research tendering work which allows us to consult and also disseminate our work across the EU. You can see the list of our research partners in 2017-2018 in latest Annual Trustees' Report.

Other agents of change: We will attempt to increase our outreach and collaboration with key change agents including youth groups, Major European companies, making pledges and joining multistakeholder initiatives; Green SMEs and eco-innovators; Responsible Investors, going now wider than climate change; Cities and regions such as the C40.

European Parliament: The findings from the analysis carried out by IEEP will be presented at key meetings of European Parliament including through the European parliament Intergroup on the Green deal and other relevant intergroups or structures which the new parliament will put in place. We will also continue to work with Globe EU, the network of environmental legislators, with whom we organised Think2030.

Public consultations and advisory committees of the European

Commission: The findings from the analysis carried out in our action will be presented at key meetings and consultations of the European Commission, including through advisory committees such as the Coordination Group on Biodiversity and Nature (CGBN) or the Horizon Europe mission boards.

European Economic and Social Committee and Committee of the Regions: IEEP will use its existing relationship to consult with stakeholders, support opinions of members (through our role as experts) and to disseminate findings.

Informal think tank group of the Secretariat of the European Council: IEEP will use its participation to engage with other think tanks, especially in other disciplines (economic, social, foreign affairs) and to disseminate its findings.

Communication channels: IEEP website with over 16,000 monthly users; the Think2030 website; the CAP 2020 website; IEEP’s LinkedIn and Twitter profiles; quarterly newsletter (reaching more than 3500 subscribers) will strongly contribute the dissemination activities proposed in relation to all intervention areas.

Fundraising needs

IEEP’s Low-carbon Circular Economy Programme will supported from July 2020 to June 2021 by a core operational grant of the Life programme, which covers 60% of its core activities. We are currently fundraising to cover the remaining 40%.
For our recent evaluation of Europe’s progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, including the Goals relevant for the low-carbon circular economy, see the 2019 Europe Sustainable Development Report:


For our latest analyses of the Green Deal, see: