

CircLean Article Toolkit

While the reuse of raw materials through industrial symbiosis (IS) can have economic and environmental benefits, only 12% of secondary materials are currently being brought back into the economy. The lack of awareness and common standards to measure and report on symbiotic exchanges, combined with insufficient motivating framework conditions, hinders the uptake of industrial symbiosis in Europe. The CircLean Network, an initiative promoted by the European Commission under DG GROW, is working on overcoming these challenges.

In its [Circular Economy Action Plan](#) and [Waste Framework Directive](#), the European Union has assigned a prominent role for industrial symbiosis. This concept describes ‘the use by one company or sector of underutilised resources broadly defined (including waste, by-products, residues, energy, water, logistics, capacity, expertise, equipment and materials) from another, with the result of keeping resources in productive use for longer’[1].

While the reuse of materials through industrial symbiosis can have economic, environmental, and social benefits, there are still challenges to its uptake in Europe. Firstly, if the concept of circular economy is now widely known in Europe, there is still a lack of awareness of the role industrial symbiosis can play in its development. Secondly, there are still too few market incentives for companies to invest in industrial symbiosis. The prices of primary raw materials, landfilling or incineration levies do not reflect the ecological impact of these practices. The waste prevention stage is also underrepresented in the EU waste hierarchy. Finally, the lack of common standards to measure and report on industrial symbiosis transactions hinders the uptake of industrial symbiosis in Europe. The limited standardised evidence on its benefits can also make businesses reluctant to invest in symbiosis.

CircLean will evidence the impacts of industrial symbiosis in the EU. It will do so by increasing the availability and quality of information available, especially when it comes to the impacts and benefits of IS in the EU. To do so, the project will set up a network of industries, public authorities, and industry associations to reflect on:

- Reporting methodology: Creating and piloting a common reporting methodology to measure and report on impacts of industrial symbiosis transactions.
- Online tools and modules: Developing online tools for assessment, matchmaking and evidence gathering to support industrial symbiosis transactions.
- CircLean Label: Establishing the common reporting methodology as a voluntary protocol and launching a CircLean label to accredit complying members

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