



CIREVALC CIRCULAR COMMUNITY ACCELERATOR

JOINTLY DEVELOPED SOLUTION OUTPUT 2.2





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1. Introduction

The transition towards circular economy models represents a key opportunity for improving resource efficiency, reducing environmental impact and strengthening the competitiveness of enterprises in the food, catering and packaging sectors. However, **micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)** and smaller organisations often face significant challenges in implementing circular solutions, including limited access to expertise, financial constraints and increasing regulatory complexity. Compared to larger companies, these organisations typically lack the internal capacities required to analyse their operations, identify circular opportunities and implement appropriate measures without targeted external support.

To address these challenges, the CIREVALC project developed the **CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator**, a structured support model designed to assist SMEs and other relevant stakeholders in initiating and advancing their circular transition. The accelerator combines analytical, advisory and capacity-building elements, providing targeted support tailored to the needs and capacities of smaller organisations.

The accelerator model builds on the initial methodological framework developed in the *CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator Design* (Deliverable D2.1.1) and has been tested and validated through regional pilot actions implemented across nine Central European regions. The results of these pilots, summarised in the *Joint report of the completed pilots* (Deliverable D2.3.2) and further refined in the *Finetuned CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator Design* (Deliverable D2.4.2), provided practical insights into effective service delivery formats, organisational requirements and expected outcomes.

This document presents the **jointly developed solution** of the CIREVALC project: the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator. It provides a structured overview of the accelerator model, including its objectives, service portfolio, implementation requirements and key success factors. The document is intended to support stakeholders interested in applying the accelerator approach in their own regional contexts.

The solution presented in this output will be further elaborated in the *Blueprint of the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator* (Deliverable D3.1.1), which provides detailed guidance to support the practical implementation and replication of the accelerator model.



2. The CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator

The **CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator** is a structured support model designed to facilitate the circular transition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and other relevant stakeholders operating in the food, catering and packaging sectors. The accelerator provides a comprehensive set of services that support organisations in identifying, planning and initiating circular economy solutions adapted to their specific operational context.

Objectives of the Accelerator

The main objective of the accelerator is to support participating organisations in moving from initial awareness of circular economy principles towards the **development and implementation of concrete circular solutions**. In particular, the accelerator aims to:

- improve understanding of circular economy concepts and regulatory requirements
- identify opportunities for improving resource efficiency and reducing waste
- support the development of circular business models and operational practices
- facilitate access to relevant expertise and financing opportunities
- strengthen cooperation within regional value chains

Target groups

The primary target group of the accelerator consists of **micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs)** operating in the food, catering and packaging sectors. In addition, the accelerator is designed to support **other smaller organisations** actively engaged in local value chains, including:

- non-governmental organisations and small associations
- local community initiatives
- small local governments and municipalities

These organisations often play an important role in regional circular ecosystems but, similarly to SMEs, typically lack the internal capacities, expertise and resources required to design and implement circular solutions without external support.



The accelerator also involves a broader group of **secondary stakeholders**, which contribute to the delivery and scaling of circular solutions. These include:

- business support organisations (BSOs)
- clusters and networks
- research and innovation actors
- public institutions

The involvement of these actors supports knowledge transfer, facilitates cooperation and contributes to the development of **circular communities** at regional level.

Value proposition of the Accelerator

The CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator offers a structured and integrated approach to circular transition, combining different types of support into a coherent framework. Its main added value lies in:

- **integrated support:** combining diagnostic analysis, tailored advisory services and capacity-building activities
- **practical orientation:** focusing on concrete, implementable solutions rather than theoretical concepts
- **tailored approach:** adapting services to the specific needs and maturity levels of participating organisations
- **multidisciplinary expertise:** providing access to a broad range of knowledge areas required for circular transition
- **community building:** facilitating cooperation and knowledge exchange within regional value chains

Core characteristics of the Accelerator

Based on the pilot experience, the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator can be characterised by the following key features:

- it is a **structured but flexible support model**, adaptable to different regional contexts
- it combines **individual and collective service formats**, depending on participant needs
- it focuses on **SMEs and smaller organisations**, ensuring accessibility and relevance



- it supports the transition from **analysis to action**, enabling organisations to initiate concrete circular measures
- it operates as a **community-based approach**, strengthening connections between actors in regional value chains



3. Structure and Delivery Process of the Accelerator Services

The **services of the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator** follow a structured delivery process that guides participating organisations from the initial assessment of their current practices to the identification and initiation of concrete circular solutions. The service delivery process is typically organised into a sequence of interconnected phases, which can be adapted in terms of timing, intensity and service mix depending on regional conditions and participant needs. The accelerator services are structured around three main phases:

- **Diagnostic and assessment phase**
- **Strategic planning and advisory phase**
- **Implementation support and capacity-building phase**

These phases reflect the logical progression from understanding the current situation, through planning improvements, to initiating concrete actions. This structure is commonly applied across implementations, while allowing for flexibility in sequencing and emphasis depending on the specific context.

3.1. Structure of the service delivery

Phase 1: Diagnostic and assessment

The first phase of the service delivery focuses on analysing the current situation of participating organisations in terms of resource use, waste generation and circularity performance. This phase typically includes:

- initial consultations with participants
- simplified material flow assessments
- identification of inefficiencies and improvement areas
- mapping of value chain relations

The objective of this phase is to establish a clear baseline and identify priority areas for intervention. The pilot experience confirmed that many organisations lack sufficient internal data and analytical capacity to identify circular opportunities without external support, making this phase a critical starting point.



Phase 2: Strategic planning and advisory

Building on the results of the diagnostic phase, the second phase of the service delivery typically provides tailored advisory support aimed at defining concrete improvement measures and longer-term circular strategies. Typical activities include:

- development of circular roadmaps or action plans
- identification of circular business model opportunities
- advisory on product design, packaging and operational processes
- guidance on regulatory requirements and financing options

This phase translates analytical findings into **practical and actionable plans**, enabling participating organisations to prioritise interventions and define realistic implementation pathways.

Phase 3: Implementation support and capacity building

The third phase of the service delivery focuses on supporting the initial implementation of circular solutions and strengthening the capacities of participating organisations. Activities may include:

- thematic workshops and training sessions
- expert consultations on specific solutions
- knowledge exchange between participants
- networking and matchmaking within value chains

In some cases, this phase can also include the testing of concrete solutions, such as new products, improved processes or alternative packaging options. These activities support the transition from planning to action and help organisations initiate tangible changes.

3.2. Timeline and duration of the service delivery

The implementation experience from the pilot phase demonstrated that the duration of the service delivery process is a critical factor for its effectiveness. While the initial design foresaw a shorter implementation period, practical experience showed that a **typical duration of 8 to 15 months** is required to complete the full process, including **participant outreach, selection and engagement**, as well as the delivery of diagnostic, advisory and implementation support services.



This timeframe allows sufficient time for:

- engaging and onboarding participants
- conducting in-depth diagnostic analyses
- delivering tailored advisory services
- initiating and, where possible, testing concrete solutions

At the same time, the exact duration may vary depending on the number of participants, the complexity of the targeted solutions and the available resources.

3.3. Flexibility of the service delivery process

Although the accelerator services follow a common structure, their delivery is **not strictly linear**. The sequence and intensity of activities may vary depending on the needs and readiness of participating organisations. In practice, phases may overlap, and certain services may be repeated or adapted throughout the process.

This flexibility ensures that the service delivery remains responsive to the evolving needs of participants and to the specific characteristics of regional value chains.



4. Service portfolio and delivery models

The CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator provides a comprehensive and flexible portfolio of services designed to support participating organisations throughout their circular transition process. The service portfolio combines analytical, advisory and capacity-building elements, which can be adapted to the specific needs, capacities and maturity levels of participants.

The accelerator services are delivered through a combination of different formats, allowing for both targeted support at the level of individual organisations and broader knowledge exchange within regional communities.

4.1. Service layers

Core services

Core services represent the central elements of the accelerator and are directly linked to the main phases of the service delivery process. These services are typically provided to all participating organisations and form the backbone of the accelerator. Core services include:

- **Circularity diagnostics and assessments:** Analysis of current operations, including resource use, waste generation and identification of improvement areas
- **Material flow analysis and mapping:** Identification of inefficiencies and opportunities within value chains
- **Development of circular roadmaps:** Definition of concrete actions, priorities and implementation pathways
- **Tailored advisory services:** Support in translating circular economy concepts into practical solutions adapted to organisational contexts

These services ensure that participating organisations can move from initial assessment towards clearly defined and actionable plans.

Complementary services

Complementary services support the core services by strengthening knowledge, skills and cooperation among participants. These services are typically delivered in a collective format and contribute to the development of circular communities. Complementary services include:



- **Workshops and training sessions:** Providing knowledge on circular economy principles, tools and best practices
- **Knowledge exchange and peer learning:** Facilitating the sharing of experiences among participating organisations
- **Networking and matchmaking activities:** Supporting cooperation within regional value chains
- **Awareness-raising activities:** Promoting circular economy concepts among a broader group of stakeholders

These services enhance the overall effectiveness of the accelerator by creating an enabling environment for learning and collaboration.

Advanced and optional services

Depending on the needs and capacities of participants, the accelerator may also include more specialised services requiring additional expertise. These services are typically provided on a demand-driven basis.

Advanced services may include:

- life cycle assessment (LCA) and carbon footprint analysis
- circular product and packaging design
- financial planning and investment advisory
- legal and regulatory advisory
- development of new circular products or services

The inclusion of these services depends on the complexity of the targeted solutions and the available resources.

4.2. Service delivery models

The accelerator services can be delivered through different formats, which can be combined depending on the objectives of the accelerator and the needs of participants.

- **Individual advisory services (1-on-1 support):** Individual advisory services provide tailored support to participating organisations, allowing for in-depth analysis and the development of solutions adapted to specific operational contexts. This format is particularly suitable for addressing complex challenges and supporting the implementation of concrete measures.
- **Collective service formats (1-to-many):** Collective formats include workshops, training sessions and networking events involving multiple participants. These formats are effective for knowledge dissemination, awareness raising and fostering cooperation among stakeholders.
- **Mixed delivery model:** In most cases, the accelerator combines individual and collective formats. This approach allows for balancing tailored support with broader knowledge exchange and



community building. The exact mix of service formats may vary depending on the objectives of the accelerator and the characteristics of participating organisations.

4.3. Flexibility of the service portfolio

The service portfolio of the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator is not fixed but designed to be adaptable to different regional contexts and participant needs. The combination, sequencing and intensity of services may vary depending on factors such as:

- the maturity level of participating organisations
- the complexity of targeted circular solutions
- the structure of regional value chains
- the availability of expertise and resources

This flexibility ensures that the accelerator remains relevant and effective across different implementation environments.



5. Implementation requirements

The effective implementation of the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator requires a combination of organisational, human and financial resources, as well as appropriate planning and coordination mechanisms. While the accelerator model is designed to be adaptable to different regional contexts, certain core requirements need to be considered to ensure its successful operation.

Preparation and design phase

Before launching the accelerator, a preparatory phase is required to adapt the model to the specific regional context and to define the scope and structure of the services to be delivered. This phase typically includes:

- identification of target groups and sectors
- definition of the service portfolio and delivery formats
- mapping and engagement of relevant experts
- establishment of partnerships with supporting organisations
- planning of outreach and recruitment activities

This preparatory phase is essential to ensure that the accelerator services are aligned with regional needs and that the necessary capacities are in place prior to implementation.

Human resources and expertise

The implementation of the accelerator requires a multidisciplinary team combining coordination, technical expertise and facilitation capacities. Key roles typically include:

- **project coordination and management**, ensuring overall organisation and monitoring of activities
- **technical experts**, providing specialised knowledge in areas such as circular economy, material flow analysis, business model development, legal and financial advisory
- **facilitators and trainers**, supporting workshops, knowledge exchange and participant engagement

Depending on the organisational setup, these roles may be fulfilled by internal staff or external service providers. Access to relevant and high-quality expertise is a critical factor for delivering effective services.

Financial and organisational resources



The implementation of the accelerator requires financial resources to cover:

- expert services and advisory activities
- organisation of workshops and events
- communication and outreach activities
- coordination and administrative tasks

The level of required resources depends on factors such as the number of participants, the scope of services and the chosen delivery model. While the accelerator can be implemented with limited resources, effective operation requires careful prioritisation of activities and efficient allocation of available capacities.

Engagement of participants

The successful implementation of the accelerator depends on the effective engagement of participating organisations throughout the process. This includes:

- outreach and recruitment of participants through open and non-discriminatory access
- onboarding and initial alignment of expectations
- continuous communication and follow-up
- maintaining motivation and commitment during the process

The pilot experience demonstrated that participant engagement requires dedicated time and effort and should be considered as an integral part of the overall implementation process.

Operational models of the accelerator

The accelerator can be implemented through different organisational models, depending on the objectives, resources and regional context.

A **cohort-based model** involves launching the accelerator in defined cycles, where a group of participants is selected through an open call, supported through the full service delivery process and followed by a new cycle. This model provides a structured framework and facilitates group learning and peer interaction.

Alternatively, a **continuous model** allows for ongoing participation, where organisations can enter the accelerator on a rolling basis. In this case, services are delivered in a more flexible and demand-driven manner, with experts engaged according to specific needs.



Both approaches have advantages and limitations. The choice of operational model depends on factors such as available resources, organisational capacities and the desired level of flexibility in service delivery.

Time requirements

The overall duration of the accelerator services typically ranges between 8 and 15 months, including participant outreach, selection and engagement, as well as the delivery of diagnostic, advisory and implementation support services.

In addition, time should be allocated for the preparation and design phase prior to the launch of the accelerator, as well as for follow-up activities after the completion of the main service delivery process.

The practical implementation of the accelerator model is further supported by the *Blueprint of the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator* (Deliverable 3.1.1), which provides templates and step-by-step guidance for preparing and organising accelerator activities. In addition, further guidance is provided on financial planning aspects (Deliverable 3.1.2), supporting stakeholders in estimating resource needs and structuring the financial framework required for the operation of the accelerator.



6. Key success factors and lessons learned

The implementation of the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator as a pilot action across different regional contexts in nine Central-European countries during 2024-2025 provided valuable insights into the conditions required for effective delivery and the factors influencing the success of the accelerator. While the model proved to be adaptable and applicable in diverse settings, several common success factors and lessons emerged from the pilot experience.

Participant engagement and commitment

A key factor influencing the effectiveness of the accelerator is the active engagement of participating organisations throughout the process. The pilot experience demonstrated that sustained participation requires:

- clear communication of expectations from the outset
- alignment of services with participant needs
- continuous follow-up and interaction

Organisations that remained actively engaged were more likely to develop and initiate concrete circular solutions. Conversely, limited engagement reduced the effectiveness of the support provided.

Balance between individual and collective support

The pilots confirmed that both individual advisory services and collective learning formats play important and complementary roles within the accelerator.

- Individual support enables tailored solutions and in-depth analysis
- Collective formats facilitate knowledge exchange and peer learning

The most effective implementations combined these formats in a flexible way, adjusting their relative importance depending on the needs and maturity of participants.

Over-reliance on a single delivery format may reduce the effectiveness of the accelerator. A purely collective approach may limit the depth of organisational change, while exclusively individual support may reduce opportunities for knowledge exchange and community building.



Importance of high-quality expertise

Access to relevant and multidisciplinary expertise proved to be a critical success factor. Circular transition often requires knowledge across multiple domains, including:

- technical and operational aspects
- business model development
- legal and regulatory frameworks
- financial planning

The availability of experienced experts significantly increased the quality and feasibility of proposed solutions.

Flexibility of the service design

The pilot experience highlighted that a rigid service structure is not suitable for addressing the diverse needs of participating organisations. Successful implementations were characterised by:

- adaptability of the service portfolio
- flexibility in sequencing and intensity of activities
- responsiveness to emerging needs

This confirms that flexibility is not an optional feature, but a core requirement of the accelerator model. Implementations that applied overly rigid service structures were less able to respond to evolving participant needs, highlighting that flexibility is not only a design feature but a practical requirement for maintaining relevance and effectiveness.

Time requirements and process duration

The pilots clearly demonstrated that the implementation of circular transition support requires sufficient time. The initially planned timeframe proved to be too short, while longer durations allowed for:

- deeper analysis
- more effective advisory support
- initiation of concrete actions



This underlines the importance of realistic time planning for future implementations. Shorter implementation periods often limited the ability to move beyond analysis towards concrete action, underlining the importance of realistic time planning in future implementations.

Role of community and cooperation

Beyond individual organisations, the accelerator contributed to strengthening cooperation within regional value chains. Networking and matchmaking activities enabled:

- exchange of knowledge and experiences
- identification of collaboration opportunities
- development of local circular ecosystems

This community dimension enhances the long-term impact of the accelerator.

Resource considerations

The implementation of the accelerator requires dedicated human and financial resources. While the model can be adapted to different resource levels, limited capacities may affect:

- the depth of advisory services
- the number of participants
- the range of services offered

Careful planning and prioritisation are therefore essential.

From analysis to action

A key achievement of the accelerator is its ability to support organisations in moving from analysis to the initiation of concrete actions. However, this transition depends on:

- the feasibility of proposed solutions
- availability of resources
- organisational readiness



The accelerator can effectively support this process, but long-term transformation requires continued effort beyond the pilot phase. Without sufficient support in the later phases of the process, organisations may remain at the level of planning, without progressing to implementation.



7. Expected results and Transferability

The CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator is designed to generate tangible results at the level of participating organisations, while also contributing to broader systemic change within regional value chains. Based on the pilot experience, the expected results of the accelerator can be observed at multiple levels.

7.1. Expected results

7.1 Expected results at organisational level

At the level of participating organisations, the accelerator supports the transition from awareness of circular economy principles towards the implementation of concrete measures. Expected results include:

- improved understanding of circular economy concepts and regulatory frameworks
- identification of inefficiencies in resource use and waste management
- development of circular roadmaps and action plans
- initiation of concrete circular solutions, such as process improvements, new products or alternative packaging approaches

These results contribute to strengthening the capacity of organisations to address sustainability challenges in a structured and informed manner.

Expected results at value chain level

Beyond individual organisations, the accelerator contributes to strengthening cooperation within regional value chains. Expected results at this level include:

- increased interaction between producers, processors and service providers
- identification of opportunities for cooperation and industrial symbiosis
- improved use of local resources and shorter supply chains
- development of new partnerships supporting circular solutions



These outcomes enhance the resilience and sustainability of regional economic systems.

Broader impacts and systemic effects

The accelerator also contributes to wider impacts beyond the direct participants. These may include:

- increased awareness of circular economy principles among regional stakeholders
- dissemination of knowledge and good practices
- support for policy development and strategic planning at regional level
- contribution to environmental objectives, including resource efficiency and waste reduction

While these impacts may materialise over a longer timeframe, the accelerator provides an important starting point for broader transformation processes.

7.2. Transferability of the accelerator model

The CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator is designed as a jointly developed solution with a strong potential for transfer and replication by third parties. The model can be applied by **external stakeholders and interested organisations**, including regional development agencies, business support organisations, clusters and public institutions.

While the accelerator was developed and tested in **Central European regions** and in the context of the food, catering and packaging sectors, its underlying approach is not limited to these geographical or sectoral boundaries. The model can be **replicated in other regions of Central Europe**, as well as **adapted and applied beyond the programme area**, depending on local conditions and strategic priorities.

Furthermore, although the accelerator was designed with a focus on specific value chains, its structure and service logic can be **transferred to other sectors**, where similar challenges related to circular transition, resource efficiency and value chain cooperation are present.

The transferability of the model is supported by its:

- **modular structure**, allowing adaptation of the service portfolio
- **flexible delivery formats**, enabling different combinations of services
- **scalability**, allowing implementation with varying levels of resources



- **focus on SMEs and smaller organisations**, which represent a common target group across sectors and regions

These characteristics enable stakeholders to adapt the accelerator model to their specific needs, capacities and policy objectives.

Conditions for successful transfer

While the model is transferable, its successful application in new contexts depends on several conditions, including:

- availability of relevant expertise and qualified service providers
- existence of a minimum level of stakeholder engagement and interest
- alignment with regional development priorities and policy frameworks
- access to sufficient organisational and financial resources

Adapting the accelerator to local conditions is therefore a key step in ensuring its effectiveness.

Outlook for further development

The jointly developed solution presented in this document provides a solid foundation for the wider application of the accelerator model. Its further development is supported through the *Blueprint of the CIREVALC Circular Community Accelerator* (Deliverable D3.1.1), which offers detailed guidance for implementation and replication.

Through this approach, the accelerator has the potential to be scaled up and adapted across different regions, contributing to the broader uptake of circular economy solutions and supporting the transition towards more sustainable and resource-efficient economic systems. This creates opportunities for wider uptake of the accelerator model by external stakeholders across different regions and sectors.