

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL

The **European Green Deal** is the European Commission's response to global challenges related to environment and climate change. The European Commission is committed to work closely on these issues with its partner countries across the world. It is an integral part of this Commission's strategy to implement the United Nation's 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The EU has voiced its ambition to lead a global transition to a circular and carbon-neutral economy.

Launched in 2007, the SWITCH-Asia programme seeks to support mainstreaming of sustainable consumption and production (SCP) in national policies in Asia and Central Asia and through piloting implementation projects ("grants projects") in various sectors.

Thereby, SWITCH-Asia contributes to an uptake of circular economy practices by supporting government action and funding SME-focussed implementation projects that can create impact at scale.

European Green Deal Ambitions

Contribution of SWITCH-Asia

Mobilise Sector-wide Transformation for a Green and Circular Economy

In March 2020, the European Commission adopted its new **Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP)**.

The Circular Economy Action Plan is a key pillar of the EU's **commitment to climate neutrality** in 2050. Its ambitions were reiterated in a statement in July 2021, to lead a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

The Action Plan seeks to make sustainable products the norm in the EU. It focuses on energy-intensive and material-intensive sectors, such as **textiles, construction and buildings, plastics and packaging, electronics, and food**. The action plan prioritises reduction and reuse of materials. It aims at reducing pressure on natural resources and promoting sustainable growth and jobs, while empowering consumers and public buyers.

Other flagship strategies in support of the Green Deal are the **From Farm to Fork Strategy** for the agri-food sector, the **Sustainable Blue Economy** for healthy oceans, fishery and tourism, the **Zero Pollution Action Plan**, the **Biodiversity Strategy 2030** and the **EU Bioeconomy Strategy**. The latter seeks new ways of producing and consuming resources while respecting planetary boundaries and moving away from a linear economy based on extensive use of fossil and mineral resources.

The majority of implementation projects by SWITCH-Asia has contributed to **climate change mitigation**. Many of its national policy assignments are also important for partner countries' emissions reduction efforts.

Many of SWITCH-Asia's efforts also directly and indirectly contribute to transforming industries towards **circularity**. SWITCH-Asia supports circular economy projects on **textiles and leather** in Cambodia, India, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; and on **resource efficiency and cleaner production** in India, Mongolia, Myanmar and Pakistan.

SWITCH-Asia supports the government of Vietnam in **mainstreaming the Circular Economy approach** into its National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2020-2030).

In addition, SWITCH-Asia has implemented or supported projects in the **agri-food** sector, inter alia in Indonesia, India, Myanmar, and Thailand.

SWITCH-Asia also works with the government of Vietnam by promoting SCP practices in the **seafood value chain**, developing a Seafood SCP Guide, and contributing to building capacity for seafood retailers/supermarkets.

Through its **Renovation Wave**, the EU seeks to provide for renovated, energy-efficient buildings, to deliver decarbonisation towards 2050. Its major principles include life-cycle thinking and circularity; decarbonisation and integration of renewables; affordability; high health and environmental standards; safety; and accessibility.

As part of its commitment to lead the way to a circular economy at the global level, the EU has launched multiple initiatives to strengthen national policy-making around the world.

In March 2020, the European Commission adopted a new **EU Industrial Strategy** to address the twin challenge of the green and digital transformation.

Products placed on the EU market should comply with **EU green regulations and standards**.

An **EU Textiles Strategy** is currently under development which seeks to change the sectors' business models for durability, repairability and sharability, development of innovative materials, and recovery of materials.

The actions under the **EU Chemicals Strategy** for sustainability aim at better protecting citizens and the environment, promoting chemicals and materials that are safe- and sustainable-by-design.

The Commission will simplify **waste management** for citizens and ensure cleaner secondary materials for businesses.

The **EU Plastics Strategy** (2018) aims to transform the way plastic products are designed, produced, used and recycled by curbing plastic waste, driving innovation and investment, making recycling profitable for business and spurring global change.

In Bangladesh and Pakistan, the **housing and building** sector is in focus of the policy advisory by SWITCH-Asia. Support is also provided to governments of Vietnam, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in the development of their National Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Roadmap/Action Plans.

To share experiences across the region and strengthen the network of SWITCH-Asia stakeholders, Cluster Meetings with government, business and civil society representatives on key sectors of circularity were held, for example on sustainable public procurement, housing and buildings, agrifood, and textiles.

SWITCH-Asia provides support to the external dimension of the new EU Industrial Strategy by working closely with MSMEs in Asia and Central Asia as part of EU supply chains, also preparing sectors for compliance of products imported from these regions with relevant EU green regulations and standards.

Projects include a project in the **leather and textiles** sector in India, where wastewater management and chemicals use is improved. Another project in India seeks to improve Asian supply chains for lowering toxins in food and textiles. An ongoing project in the textiles sector of Mongolia supports low-pollution technologies. SWITCH-Asia supports the government of Mongolia to green supply chains of MSMEs in the textiles sector.

Currently SWITCH-Asia is supporting projects on **waste prevention and management** in India and Mongolia, organic waste management in Kazakhstan, agri-food and building sectors in Kyrgyzstan and waste reduction in the garment sector in Cambodia.

SWITCH-Asia has tackled the plastics challenge in implementation projects in Cambodia, India, Laos, Mongolia, and Myanmar. It currently implements a regional project on **plastics prevention and recycling** in the Lakshadweep Sea for Sri Lanka, Maldives and India.

SWITCH-Asia also currently supports the governments of Laos and the Maldives on developing strategies for **plastics** and has recently concluded a similar assignment in Pakistan. Experiences built through the EU Single-Use Plastics Directive and its Plastics Strategy contribute to this support.

SWITCH-Asia also builds a stakeholder community among its partners and implementing organisations, initiated by a Cluster Meeting on plastics and followed up by several workshops on the topic.

The European Commission is committed to **strengthen truly transformative technologies and business cases, thereby contributing to the Green deal ambitions** and reducing “greenwashing”.

- The Commission will promote a **standard methodology to assess the impact** of products and industrial production on the environment.
- The Commission seeks to cooperate with industry in achieving longer lasting products that can be repaired, recycled and re-used
- Public authorities, including the EU institutions, should lead by example and ensure that their **procurement** is green.

SWITCH-Asia supports the governments of Thailand, Malaysia, Mongolia, Indonesia and India in the uptake of Green Public Procurement, also taking up good practices of public administrations in the EU.

Through its policy assignments, SWITCH-Asia has also contributed to sustainable consumption by standard-setting in Tajikistan and Thailand.

New Technologies, Innovation and Skills to Foster Sustainable Consumption and Production

New **technologies**, sustainable solutions and disruptive innovation are critical to achieve the objectives of the EU Green Deal.

The **European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT)** plays a key role in supporting knowledge and innovation communities.

The **EU Skills Agenda** is launched in support of the EU Green Deal, as well as the European Digital Strategy and the new Industrial and Small and Medium Enterprise Strategy. Inter alia, it seeks to improve vocational education and training, in order to equip the workforce to support a fair transition to a green and digital economy as well as the post-COVID economic recovery.

The use of new technologies and innovation is encouraged within the grant scheme of the SWITCH-Asia programme. This allows MSMEs to test and adopt new sustainable practices, thereby reducing the environmental impact of their industrial processes. Projects include **agro-processing** in Pakistan and **plastics management** in India.

SWITCH-Asia engages with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), profiting from its experience and knowledge within the technical assistance provided to national governments in Asia and Central Asia and as part of its grants projects' scheme.

SWITCH-Asia supports the grants implementation organisations and the national governments it works with on skills upgradation strategies and measures. For example, it builds a skilled rural solar technology workforce for an agri-food project in Cambodia and builds capacity on energy efficiency for sugar mills in Pakistan. In its policy work, SWITCH-Asia supports the government of Bhutan in integrating SCP issues into its curricula, thereby educating tomorrow's workforce.

Pursuing Green Finance and Investments to Ensure a Green Transition

As part of its commitment to SDG implementation and the Paris Agreement, as well as bilateral support, the European Union channels financing to relevant initiatives in multiple ways, including through regional investment platforms. This allows to support and scale-up business cases that are relevant to the Green Deal.

The European Union will build on the **International Platform on Sustainable Finance (IPSF)** to coordinate efforts on environmentally sustainable finance initiatives such as taxonomies, disclosures, standards and labels.

SWITCH-Asia implementation projects integrate financing as an important component to enable scale-up and replication. Projects develop business cases to be financed by local banks and investors. Often, these are also of relevance to international financial institutions, particularly with regard to climate finance and financing for resource efficiency. For example, in India, 600 bioeconomy enterprises working with bamboo were financed on the basis of their improved business plans, and the electrification of more than 1,700 auto-rickshaws was funded by national business support schemes distributed by banks.

In addition, SWITCH-Asia projects have also collaborated with international development finance institutions, like KfW in Nepal as part of improving energy efficiency in the metal supply chain and ADB for household-focussed energy efficiency measures in Mongolia.

SWITCH-Asia seeks to collect and analyse good practices with regard to financing green and circular business models and connect SMEs and entrepreneurs with financing programmes and institutions.

International Engagement

In response to the **2030 Agenda**, the EU adopted a sustainable development package which was upgraded in 2019 to a holistic **"whole of government"** approach in the context of the EU Green Deal. The Green Deal is directly relevant to 12 of the 17 SDGs and is indirectly impacting their entirety.

The EU is determined to use its influence, expertise and financial resources to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the EU and beyond.

As part of its commitment to climate change mitigation, the EU is a signatory of the **Paris Agreement** which seeks to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic (human induced) interference with the climate system¹.

The importance of the circular economy for climate action is acknowledged by science and policy,

The European Union will engage more intensely with all partners around the world to increase the collective effort and help them to revise and implement their **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** as part of the Paris Agreement. The European Union will promote **green alliances** as part of its relations with its partner countries.

SWITCH-Asia implementation projects and its policy advisory is relevant to SDG implementation. Current SWITCH-Asia implementation projects are contributing to all 17 SDGs. National advisory projects focus on SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, and also target overarching issues, such as **public procurement** in India and Thailand and integrating SCP into **school curricula** in Bhutan as well as forging networks and partnerships across the region and between EU and Asian actors. SWITCH-Asia also supports national governments in contributing to international conferences and thereby strengthens dialogue on SDGs in the context of the Green Deal.

SWITCH-Asia provides support to governments sector-strategies that are of great relevance to their climate strategies, including the building sector, the agrifood sector, and waste management. By offering advisory on prioritising cleaner production and circularity for national economies, it thereby contributes to the realisation of the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

In the SWITCH-Asia implementation projects, circular economy approaches are tested and scaled up and replicated across sectors. The projects build a track record of successful approaches to circularity and learning experiences.

The SWITCH-Asia programme thereby provides a platform for partnerships and networks between Europe and Asia, supporting the implementation of national strategies and action plans on SCP practices. With the assistance of the European Commission, Asian countries are supported to transition towards low-carbon, resource-efficient and more circular economies that contribute to poverty reduction.

Sources: [SWITCH-Asia website](https://www.switch-asia.eu) and [grants programme database](#), [European Commission website](#)

