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CIRCNETS

Northern Periphery and Arctic



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Introduction

Time for the last newsletter of CIRCNETS! The project, running from the beginning of 2023 to the end of 2025, has now concluded its work. A lot has been learned about the implementation of EPR for plastic containing fishing gear and more generally about the waste management of fishing gear and how these things come about in the NPA area. These learnings have been put into the reports and outputs of the project which I, Gus the Gull, will present to you at the end of this newsletter. Before that, I'll tell you about the project's exciting final webinar that was held in December and about the evaluation of the SUP directive, which is now open.



Throwback to 2023 – the first group photo at Sotenäs, where it all started...

Final webinar 2nd of December 2025

The final webinar of CIRCNETS was held on 2nd of December 2025 and it introduced the listeners to the story of the project with three outside commentators discussing the SUP directive and the EPR for fishing gear.

Niko Hänninen opened the webinar talking about the background of CIRCNETS - marine plastic pollution and EU's answer to it, the SUP directive – and the main objectives of the project. After Niko, Heikki Lehtinen from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Finland gave a commentary about the creation of the SUP directive and why it became as it is.

Next, the key findings and recommendations of CIRCNETS were presented. Ian Brannigan started with Output 2.1, which is looking at the policy pathway for fishing gear waste. We have talked and consulted many stakeholders from various branches and organisations that are connected to fishing gear. In these discussions we have identified key challenges, which require interventions on the policy level. Based on this we have compiled sets of recommendations about policy and regulation, financial policy and public investment, market development, etc. These form a pathway, which can help to improve collection, sorting and recycling of EOL fishing gear.

Paula Costa Domech introduced then Output 2.2, which is focused on emerging technologies. Stakeholder analysis and technology assessment is required as decisions on the implementation of emerging technologies are made, and this output provides a model for making these decisions.

Finally, Siv Marina Flø Grimstad introduced Output 3.1, which gives overall recommendations for the EPR scheme for fishing gear in the NPA area, from the design stage of the gear to the recycling phase. This was followed by commentary from Percy Foster from the Irish interim PRO, Haul It Back. Percy explained how the PRO for EOL fishing gear has been built up in Ireland and how cooperation with CIRCNETS has been beneficial for this.

In the final part of the webinar, Jenni Ylä-Mella introduced the positive changes created by CIRCNETS and the key takeaways of the project: strengthening cooperation between stakeholders, building a functioning value chain for recycling, and reviewing legislation based on recent experience. This was followed by a commentary from Tuomo Leino from Rapala VMC and the Finnish SUP Producer Group's board, who talked about how the current SUP directive regulations are not optimal, especially from the recreational fishing point-of-view and introduced possible development options.

The webinar was attended by 45 participants from various backgrounds. It provided a deep dive into the current collection and recycling systems for fishing gear in the NPA area and ways to develop these systems, so that they would better match the realities of the industry. If you missed the webinar or just want to get back to the presentations, you can find them [here](#).

SUP directive evaluation

We told in [this news piece](#) from 14th of January, that the European Commission has opened the public consultation of the SUP directive in the Have your say-portal. This evaluation of the directive investigates if the directive is still fit for purpose, have the objectives been achieved and it also identifies areas of

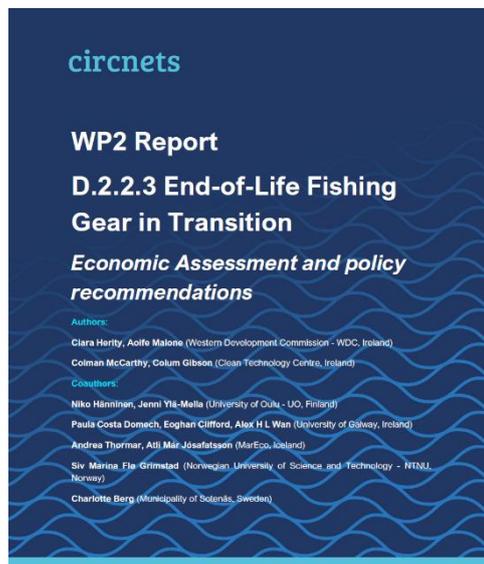


improvement. Feedback is asked about all the various products that are subject to the SUP directive, but the specific issue regarding fishing gear is whether there should be binding quantitative collection rates for these on the EU level. If you have an opinion about this or any other SUP related aspect, now is your chance to be heard.

Anyone can give feedback, either through a written statement or answering a questionnaire (or both!), and the deadline for this is 17th of March 2026. We plan to comment on this on behalf of the project, and we encourage everyone to do the same. The timing of this public consultation is great for us, since we have gathered a lot of information in CIRCNETS, which can be valuable for the future development of the SUP directive. Besides gathering the public's views on this topic, the evaluators are carrying out consultations with various parties, who have more in-depth information about the situation. We had recently a chance to talk with them and to tell them about our project results, general observations from the project's lifetime and about the challenges related to implementation of EPR for fishing gear in the NPA region.

Final reports and outputs of the project

The project officially ended at the end of 2025, and we have been busy putting together the final reporting of the project and the final project deliverables. We are almost there, and we are happy to inform you that we have published three brand new reports, which are available on our website.



The D.2.2.3 report (see full title above) is a conclusion of the webinars, workshops and one-on-one stakeholder discussions with a focus on economic issues related to collection, sorting and recycling of end-of-life fishing gear. Key challenges have been identified, and policy recommendations have been drafted which address these issues. Output O.2.1 summarises in a concise way this pathway how fishing gear waste can be turned into economic value.

The next report is D.2.3.2, which is a technology best practice survey that includes results from the survey that was conducted with key stakeholders. The report includes also best practices from beyond the NPA region.

The D.2.5.1 report assesses the readiness level of the NPA countries in the project (Finland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden) for the implementation of the EPR directive. In the report, the stage of progress of the partner countries is assessed in material quantities, material sorting and treatment, and technical coordination (e.g., establishing collection points, reporting obligations, and transport requirements). The report includes recommendations for each country on how to improve these. This is good read as well!

This concludes the work of CIRCNETS. Finishing touches are still being made to the last report and output of the project, but all the other reports are available on our [website](#). You can also find other materials from there, such as these newsletters and photo albums of the CIRCNETS events. If you have any questions about the project, do not hesitate to reach out!

Goodbye for now, but let's stay in touch! And remember to return your old fishing gear to the collection points!

Gus, on behalf of the whole CIRCNETS team

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Blue Circular Nets (CIRCNETS)

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