

**circnets**

# O.2.1: From End Of Life to Economic Value: A Policy Pathway for Fishing Gear Waste

**Interreg**



Co-funded by  
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Northern Periphery and Arctic

**CIRCNETS**

# GLOSSARY

**End-of-life fishing gear:** Fishing gear and gear accessories (e.g. ropes, floats, sink weights and other attachments) that are no longer actively used by fishers. These gears are discarded.

**SWOT analysis:** strategic planning framework used to evaluate an organization's or project's Strengths (S), Weaknesses (W), Opportunities (O), and Threats (T), helping to identify internal factors (S, W) and external factors (O, T) for better decision-making, goal setting, and strategy development.

## ABREVIATIONS

BIM	Bord Iascaigh Mhara
CIRCNETS	Blue Circular Nets project
EC	End consumers
EOL	End-of-life
EPR	Extended producer responsibility
F/A I	Fishing/aquaculture industry
FFL	Fishing for Litter campaign
FGP	Fishing gear producers
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
LA	Local authorities
NGOs	Non-governmental organizations
NPA	Northern Periphery & Arctic
PA	Port authorities
PM	Policy makers
R	Recyclers
RI	Research institutions
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SME	Small Medium Enterprises
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis
WMF	Waste management firms





# INTRODUCTION



## CONTEXT

Improperly managed EOL fishing gear poses significant environmental, social, and economic challenges, especially in regions where recovery technologies and good waste management practices are lacking. When EOL fishing gear are not collected, recycled, or safely disposed of, they often end up abandoned at sea or landfilled. Through extensive research and engagement with relevant stakeholders, the CIRCNETS project has identified the following **challenges and barriers in EOL fishing gear waste management:**



### Logistics

The complexity of materials makes **transport and sorting difficult and labor-intensive**. **Limited collection points** and the need for **nearby pre-treatment facilities** further hinder effective management.



### Materials

**Skilled labor** is required for sorting the materials fractions. **Contaminated materials are difficult to process**. These challenges significantly hinder effective recycling efforts.



### Traceability

**Manual tracking systems, inconsistent data sharing, and communication problems** between value chain actors undermine transparency and reporting efficiency.



### Economy

**Recycled products often cost more than virgin plastic ones**. **Limited recycling facilities** combined with **costly procedures** further reduce the economic potential of recycling EOL fishing gear.

In this output, we want to outline the journey to a policy pathway, the policy measures that could provide a way forward. a roadmap for delivery and an impact assessment.



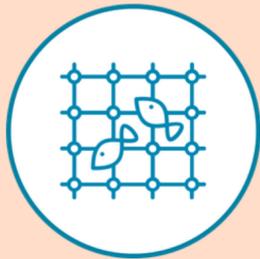
# POLICY PATHWAY STEP 1: GATHER INPUTS

## STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

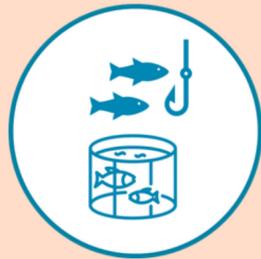


### Stakeholders

Consultation and engagement with key stakeholders took place through workshops and one to one interviews.



Fishing/aquaculture gear producers



Fishing/aquaculture industry



Port authorities



Local authorities



NGOs



Recyclers



Waste management firms



Policy makers



Research institutions



SME's



# POLICY PATHWAY STEP 2: SWOT ANALYSIS & WHAT IT TELLS US

## ASSESSMENT



### SWOT analysis

The synthesis of stakeholder inputs and workshop findings within a SWOT framework enabled a clear translation of analysis into policy direction. Strengths informed areas for protection and scaling, weaknesses highlighted priorities for policy intervention, opportunities shaped areas for strategic investment, and threats underscored risks requiring mitigation.

<b>Strengths</b> <b>S</b> Scale & Protect	<b>Weaknesses</b> <b>W</b> Address with Policy
<b>Opportunities</b> <b>O</b> Strategic Investment	<b>Threats</b> <b>T</b> Mitigate

For more information on SWOT analysis: <https://euro-funding.com/en/blog/what-is-the-technology-maturity-scale-trl/>

[2] Unicef. (2023). SWOT AND PESTEL. Understanding your external and internal context for better planning and decision-making. <https://hbr.org/2007/03/from-swot-to-tows->



# POLICY PATHWAY STEP 3: FROM EVIDENCE TO POLICY ACTION

## SWOT AS A SORTING PROCESS

### STAKEHOLDER INPUTS

Inconsistent  
Collection  
Systems

Uncertain  
volumes

Reuse  
happens -  
not recognised

Gear is  
hard to  
dismantle

Markets for  
recycled  
materials  
feel risky

#### STRENGTHS

Best Practice Examples exist  
Positive environmental attitudes  
Strong ethos of reuse

#### WEAKNESSES

Poor Collection systems  
Complex Material  
Data gaps

#### OPPORTUNITIES

EcoDesign Standards  
Traceability  
Pilots

#### THREATS

Uncertain volumes  
Market Challenges  
Profitability

### POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Public Investments in Infrastructure & logistics

Data Traceability & Reporting Frameworks

Regulatory Certainty

Design Standards for Circularity

Community led delivery

Market Creation

## EMERGING POLICY PATHWAY

Based on the stakeholder consultations, and considering the details on the SWOT analysis as Policy Problem Statements, the following 3 Policy Pillars as pathways to improvements emerged underpinned by two horizontal principles.

### STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

**POLICY &  
REGULATORY  
FRAMEWORK**

*Brings Certainty  
& Responsibility*

**FINANCIAL  
POLICY &  
PUBLIC  
INVESTMENT**

*Brings Viability  
& Capacity*

**POLICY TO  
SUPPORT  
MARKET  
DEVELOPMENT**

*Creates  
Demand & Value*

### IMPLEMENTATION ENABLERS



# **POLICY PATHWAY**

## **An Overview**



## POLICY PATHWAY

To map a pathway toward solutions and realise the economic potential of end-of-life (EOL) fishing gear, the Blue Circular Nets (CIRCNETS) project developed a Policy Pathway for national policymakers. The following pages outline the Horizontal Principles that support implementation, as well as the Policy Pillars essential for success.

### HORIZONTAL PRINCIPLES

Underpinning the Policy Pillars are the Horizontal Principles of Stakeholder engagement & Implementation Enablers. Meeting and fulfilling these conditions will lay the foundation for successful policy implementation.



#### Stakeholder Engagement

- Local Knowledge Sharing
- Empower Social Enterprises & Fishing Co-operatives
- Education, Outreach & storytelling
- Involve Community members, fishers, local business & NGO's in policy discussions



#### Implementation Enablers

- Use of Existing Infrastructure
- Pilot projects with tangible products
- Systematic Collection infrastructure
- Create SOP's for dismantling, sorting & quality
- Tracking & Traceability systems



## POLICY PATHWAY - PILLAR 1

Implementation  
of  
EPR for EOL Fishing Gear

Implementation  
of  
mandatory eco design  
standards for fishing gear

PILLAR 1: POLICY &  
REGULATORY  
FRAMEWORK

Set recycled  
content  
target for sepcific  
product  
categories & pilot use

Measurement  
Frameworks for re-use



**GOAL: To create certainty,  
responsibility and design for  
circularity**



## POLICY PATHWAY - PILLAR 2

Invest in dedicated recycling infrastructure & technology to process EOL gear locally

Audit & repurpose existing infrastructure

### PILLAR 2: FINANCIAL POLICY & PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Fund comprehensive collection and transport systems

Establish accessible green financing tools

Provide targeted innovation & SME support



**GOAL:** To enable financially viable & regionally appropriate circular systems by supporting investment and innovation.



## POLICY PATHWAY - PILLAR 3

Mandate digital product passports for fishing gear materials and products

Use Public Procurement as a market anchor

PILLAR 3: POLICY TO SUPPORT MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Support quality product market development

Unlock the nylon recycling bottleneck

Facilitate exchange platforms for recycled materials



**GOAL:** To stimulate sustained demand for recycled fishing gear materials

# FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

## IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP

The implementation roadmap below sets out a structured yet adaptive pathway from evidence to delivery. It integrates economic analysis, policy design, and on-the-ground implementation, supported by continuous monitoring and feedback. This staged approach ensures that investment decisions, regulatory mechanisms, and community outcomes are grounded in data, tested through pilots, and refined based on real-world performance across the NPA region.



### STAGE A

#### EVIDENCE/DATA

Data Collection  
Analysis  
Modelling

#### OUTPUTS

Economic & Market Report  
Baseline Metrics  
Gap Analysis



### STAGE B

#### POLICY/MODELLING

Design specific policy instruments  
Structure investment & delivery models  
KPI's & Reporting requirements

#### OUTPUTS

Policy & Regulatory Frameworks  
Investment Roadmaps & funding models  
Compliance Toolkits



### STAGE C

#### DELIVERY/SCALING

Pilot projects to test models  
Monitoring & Traceability systems  
Systematic Review

#### OUTPUTS

Delivery & Reporting Systems  
Verified impact Data  
Refined & Scalable implementation models

Short

Medium

Long

## WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

### IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The impact assessment outlines the tangible environmental, economic, social and governance benefits that will arise from implementing the proposed policy framework in a coordinated and sustained manner across the Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) region. By aligning regulatory certainty, targeted financial support, and market development measures, the recommendations move beyond waste management toward systemic circularity. Success is therefore not defined by a single metric, but by measurable improvements across four interlinked outcome areas: reduced environmental harm, strengthened local economies, empowered coastal communities, and more coherent and accountable governance structures. Together, these outcomes describe a resilient circular system for fishing and aquaculture gear that delivers long-term value for both people and the marine environment.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL



Less marine litter

Higher Re-use & Recycling

Lower Carbon Footprint

#### ECONOMIC



Jobs & local value

Secondary raw materials market

Reduced Waste costs

#### SOCIAL



Stronger coastal communities

Social Enterprise growth

Improved sector reputation

#### GOVERNANCE



Clear lines of responsibility (EPR)

Better data & reporting

Policy coherence across NPA



## CONCLUSION & BENEFITS

The Northern Periphery & Arctic Region can lead in circular fishing gear systems. Co-ordinated implementation will deliver environmental protection, economic resilience and social value simultaneously.

The main **key benefits** of following and implementing the policy pathway are:



### **Significant Reduction in Marine Pollution**

Improved collection systems, EPR implementation and ecodesign standards will reduce abandoned & EOL fishing gear entering the environment, directly lowering marine litter.



### **Reduced Public & industry costs over time**

Efficiency in this space will reduce landfill, storage and clean up costs for ports, municipalities and operators.



### **Increased Investor & market confidence**

Digital Traceability systems, standardised reporting and ecodesign requirements will reduce risk and uncertainty, making the sector more attractive for private investment and green finance.



### **Creation of stable value chains**

Regulatory certainty & predictable feedstock flows will transform fragmented streams into structured markets.



### **Local Economic Growth & Job Creation**

Investment in regional recycling infrastructure, collection logistics and social enterprises retains material value in coastal areas and has the potential to generate employment in remote areas.



### **Stronger Governance & Cross Border Policy coherence**

Harmonised reporting frameworks, coordinated EPR structures, and shared best practice across the NPA region will improve accountability, data quality, and long-term system resilience.



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## Improving the management of end-of-life fishing gear

Blue Circular Nets (CIRCNETS) supports collection, treatment and recycling of fishing gear, so that these end-of-life nets are disposed appropriately, and they will not end up in seas and degrade the marine environment.

[interreg-npa.eu/projects/circnets/](https://interreg-npa.eu/projects/circnets/)

