

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

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



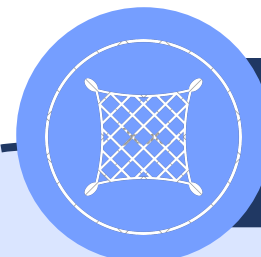
CONTEXT

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

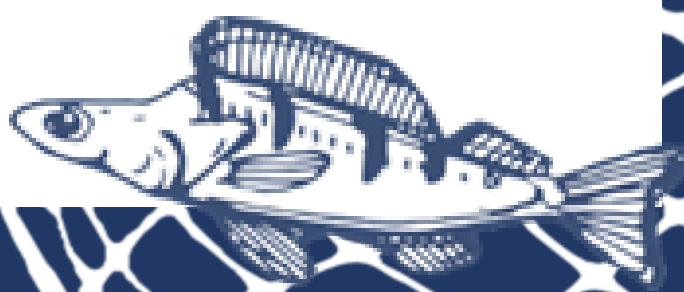
Manual tracking systems, inconsistent data sharing, and communication problems between value chain actors undermine transparency and reporting efficiency.



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.



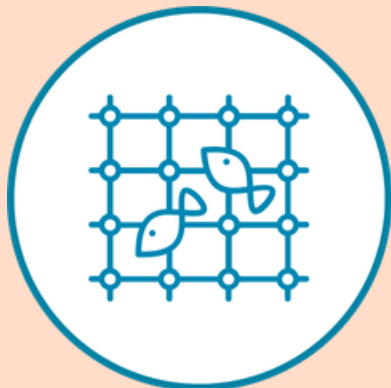
POLICY PATHWAY STEP 1: GATHER INPUTS

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

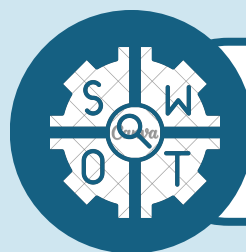


SME's



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.

Strengths S Scale & Protect	Weaknesses W Address with Policy
Opportunities O Strategic Investment	Threats T 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

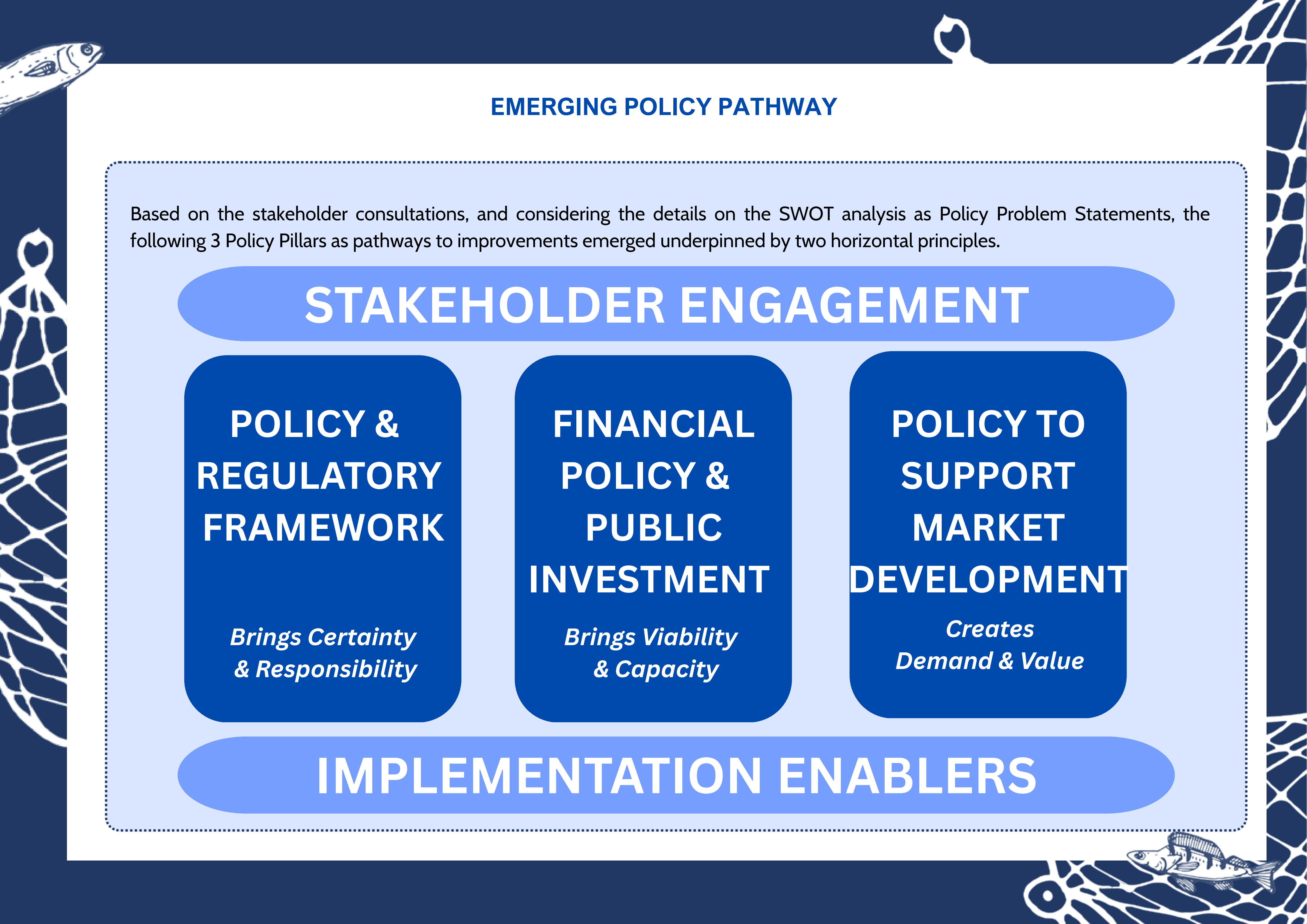
Data Traceability & Reporting Frameworks

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

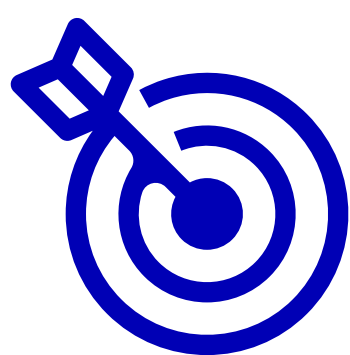
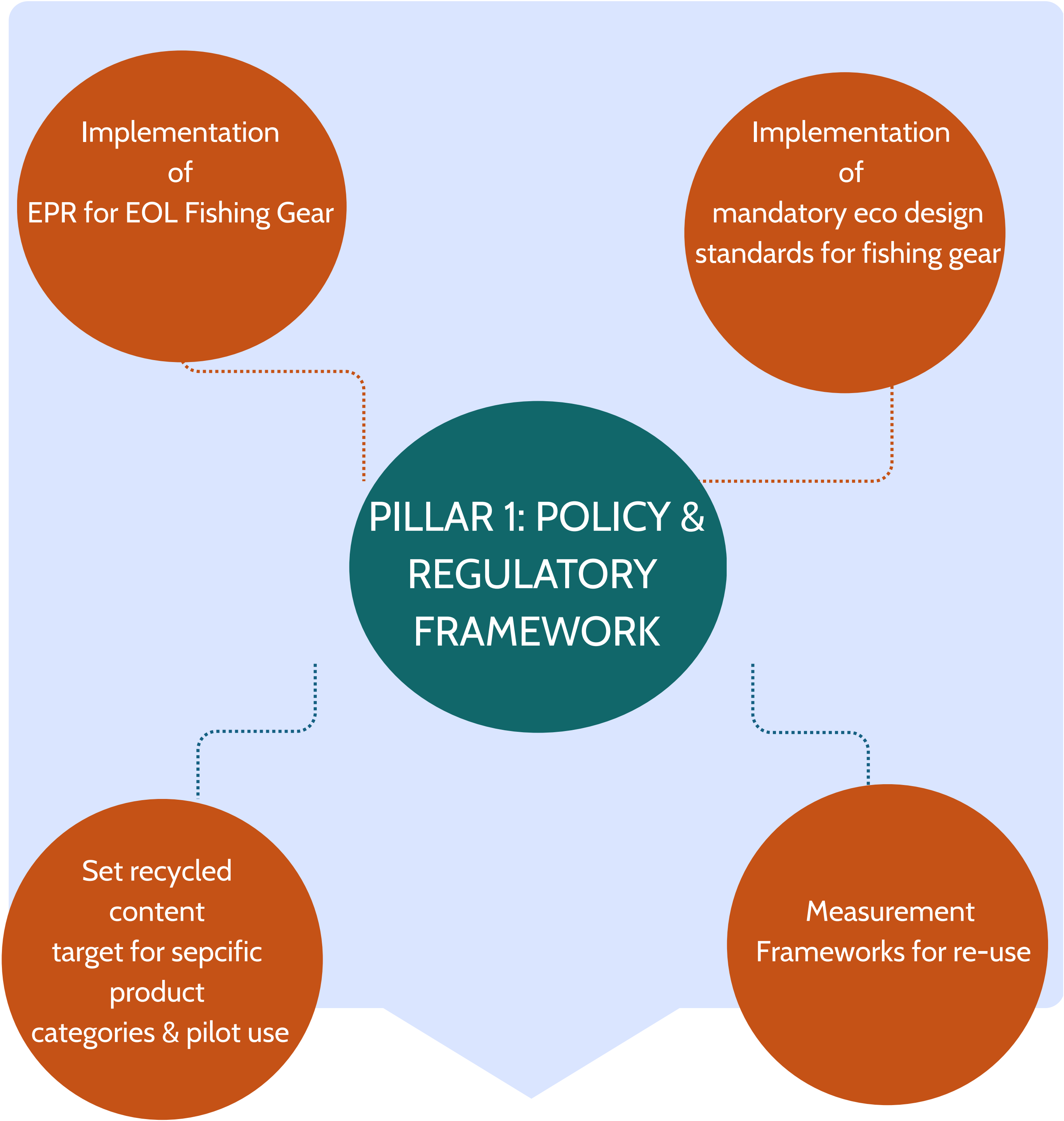
Implementation Enablers



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



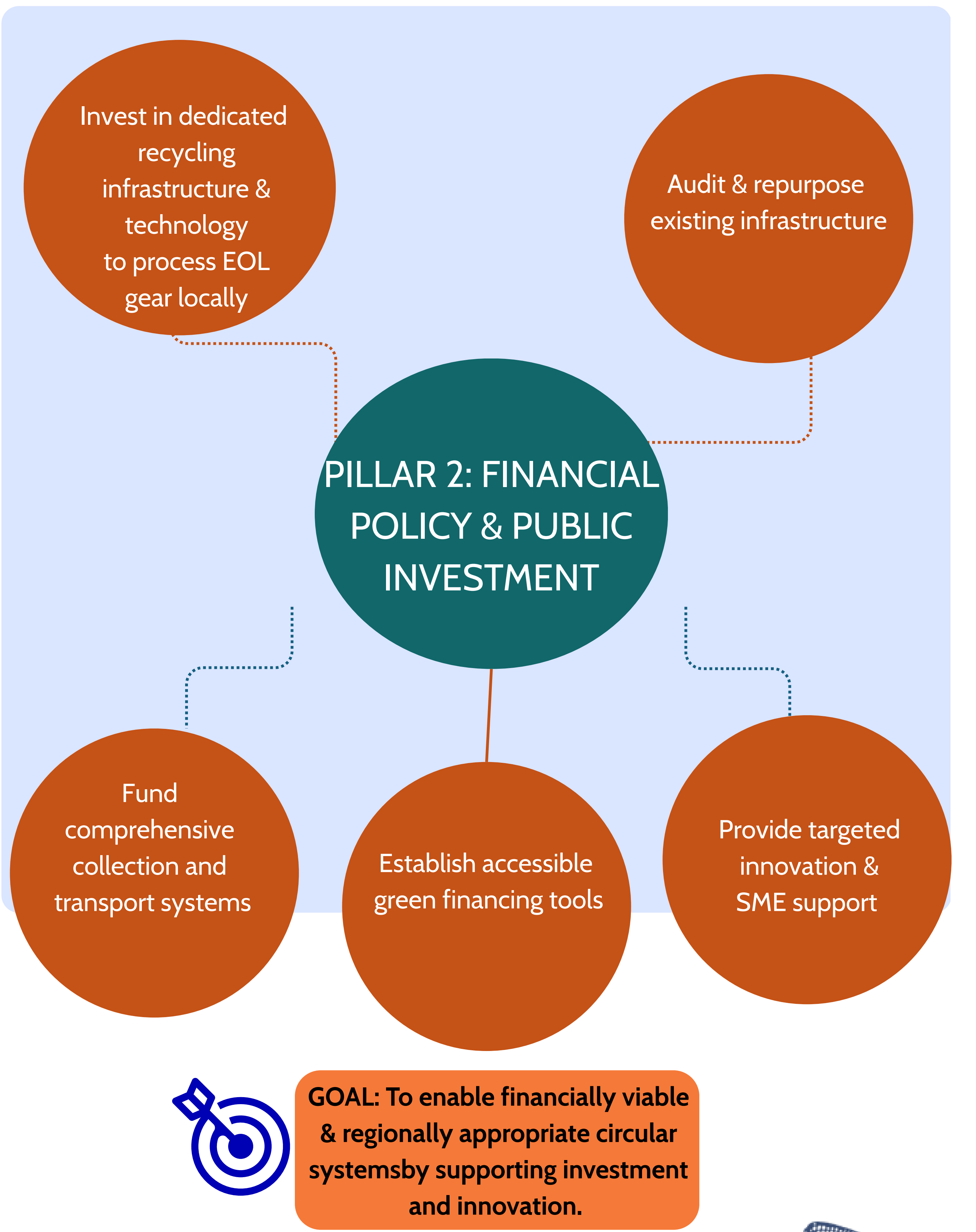
POLICY PATHWAY - PILLAR 1



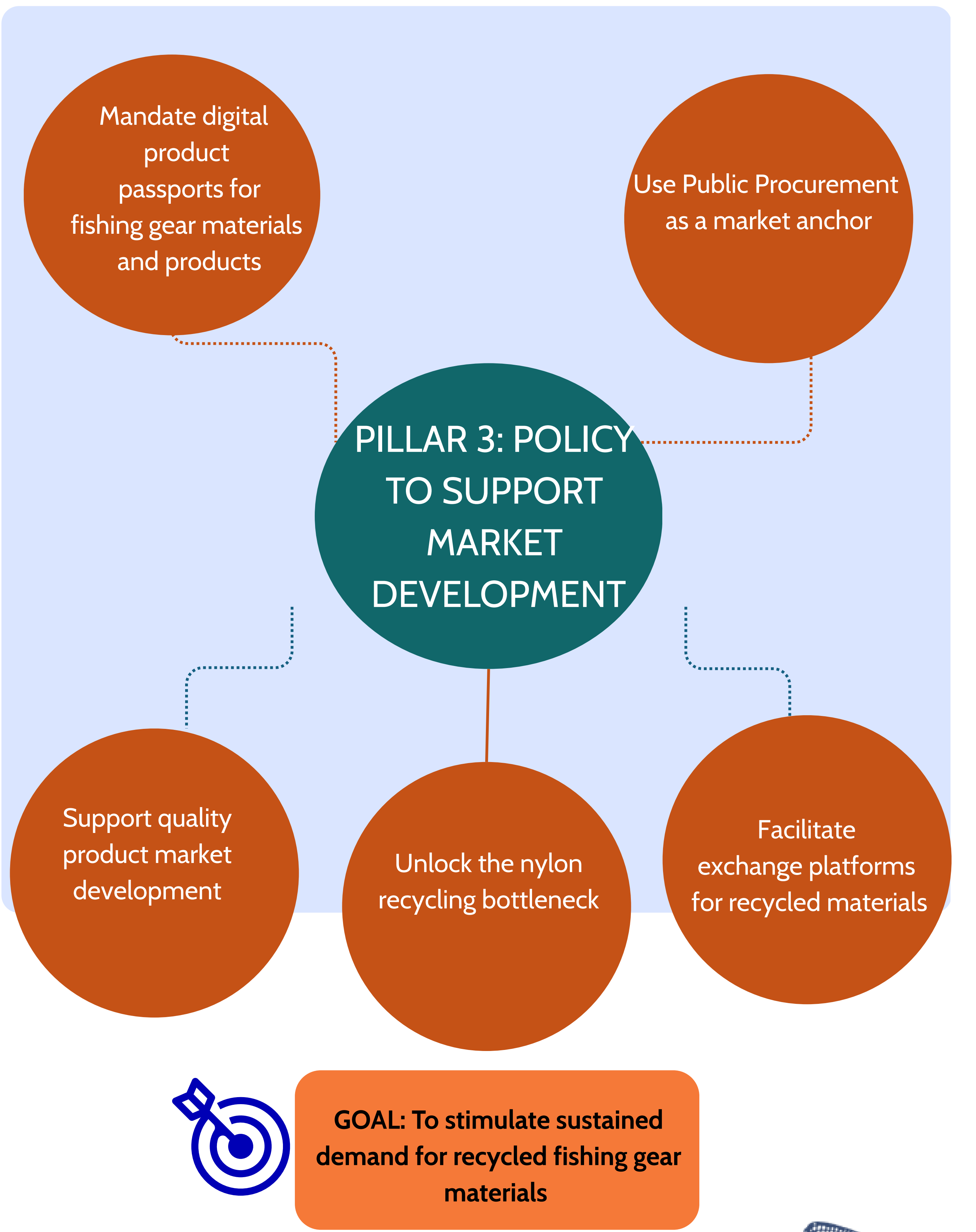
GOAL: To create certainty, responsibility and design for circularity



POLICY PATHWAY - PILLAR 2



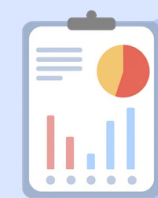
POLICY PATHWAY - PILLAR 3



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.



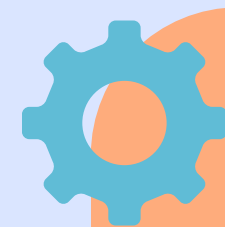
STAGE A

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

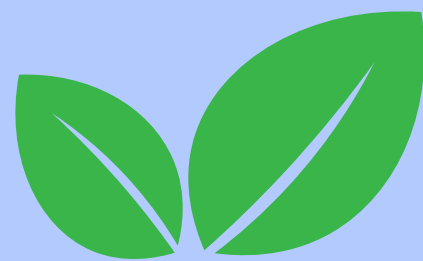
Long

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:



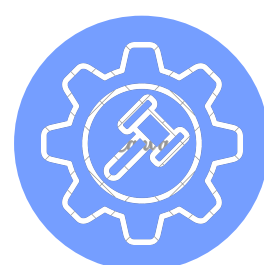
Significant Reduction in Marine Pollution

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



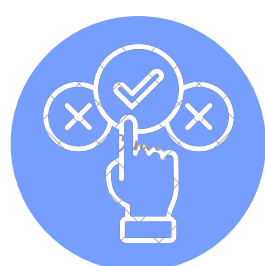
Reduced Public & industry costs over time

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.



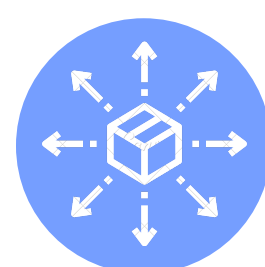
Creation of stable value chains

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.





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/

