

Place-Based Missions for Circular Economy Transitions

Capacity Building Modules

March 2026

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Learning Journey

Module 1

Introduction to Place-Based Missions in the Circular Transition

Module 2

Engaging and Orchestrating for Mission Mobilization in Circular Economy

Module 3

Shaping a Shared Mission Direction in the Circular Transition

Module 4

Designing Mission Portfolios in Circularity

Module 5

Implementing and Learning through Experimentation in Circular Economy

This module builds on and adapts the learning architecture and methodological foundations developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) under the Preparatory Action *Territories in Action – Innovation for Place-Based Transformation*.
The content of the modules has been created and adapted by **Climate KIC Academy**.

Module 4

Designing Mission Portfolios in Circularity

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Learning Outcomes

Across the program, participants will develop a shared understanding that enables them to:

Design coherent mission portfolios and governance arrangements aligned with systemic change.

In this module, you will work towards the program-level outcome by learning to:

A

Understand the role of mission portfolios in supporting systemic circular economy transitions.

B

Identify different types of initiatives and policy instruments that can contribute to a place-based circular mission.

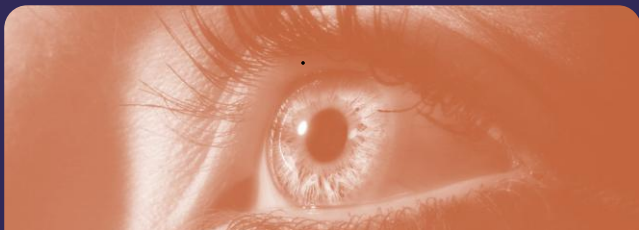
C

Structure a portfolio of complementary actions aligned with a mission direction.

D

Reflect on governance and coordination arrangements needed to manage mission portfolios across actors and institutions.

Structure of the Module



I

Conceptual framing

Introduction to **key concepts** related to innovation portfolios for mission implementation, including governance and resource mobilization.



II

Guided practice

A **self-guided activity** exploring how initiatives in your region could form a mission portfolio.

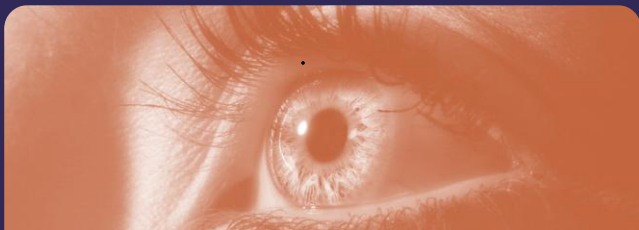


III

Seeds of change from regions

Short **examples** showing how missions portfolios are implemented in practice.

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Introduction to **key concepts** related to innovation portfolios for mission implementation, including governance and resource mobilization.



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From Vision to Implementation

Connecting the Previous Modules

In the previous modules, we explored how to:

- Understand circular economy challenges as **systemic transitions**
- **Engage actors** and frame **shared directions** for change.
- Define **place-based missions**

The next step is to explore how missions can be **implemented** in practice, by turning direction into coordinated sets of actions across the circular system.



Implementing a Mission

From direction to coordinated action

Achieving a mission requires more than defining a goal.

It requires **coordinated action** across multiple initiatives, actors and sectors working together towards a shared direction in circular economy.

In practice, this means combining different types of actions that reinforce each other. For example:

- Circular business models
- Policy and regulatory changes
- Infrastructure and investment
- Experimentation and pilot projects

that **together**, enable circular transitions.



From Missions to Coordinated Action

Organizing Action for Systemic Change

When these different actions are intentionally connected and coordinated, they form what we call an innovation portfolio.

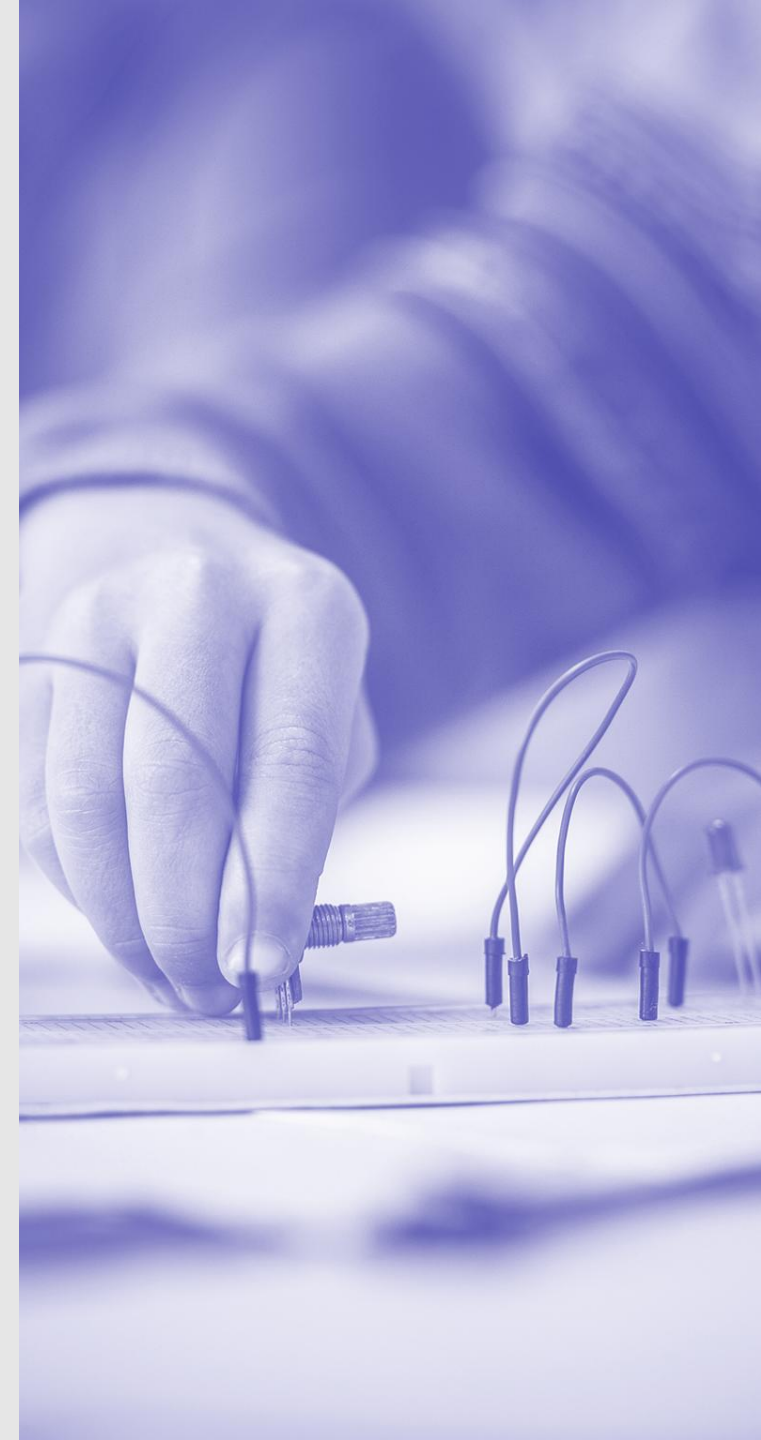
An **innovation portfolio** is simply:

a set of complementary actions working together to drive systemic circular change.

It helps to:

- Connect initiatives across the circular value chain
- Coordinate efforts across actors and sectors
- Align resources towards the circular mission.

In this module, we explore how to design and organize these sets of actions, the portfolios, to implementation of your circular mission (defined in Module 3).



Structure of the Module

Designing and Orchestrating Portfolios of Action for circular transitions

The module explores how regions can move from isolated projects to **coordinated sets of actions (or portfolios of action)** that support systemic circular economy transitions.

1

From Projects to Coordinated Action (Portfolios)

Understanding why complex circular economy transitions require moving beyond isolated projects towards coordinated sets of interventions (portfolios of actions) addressing different parts of the regional system.

2

Mission-Governance and Portfolio Orchestration

Examining how governance structures can coordinate actors, initiatives and learning processes to guide the portfolio towards the shared circularity mission direction.

3

Mobilizing Resources

Exploring how financial, institutional and knowledge resources can be aligned to support and accelerate mission-driven circular economy transition.

From Projects to Coordinated Action

Why systemic change requires coordination.

1

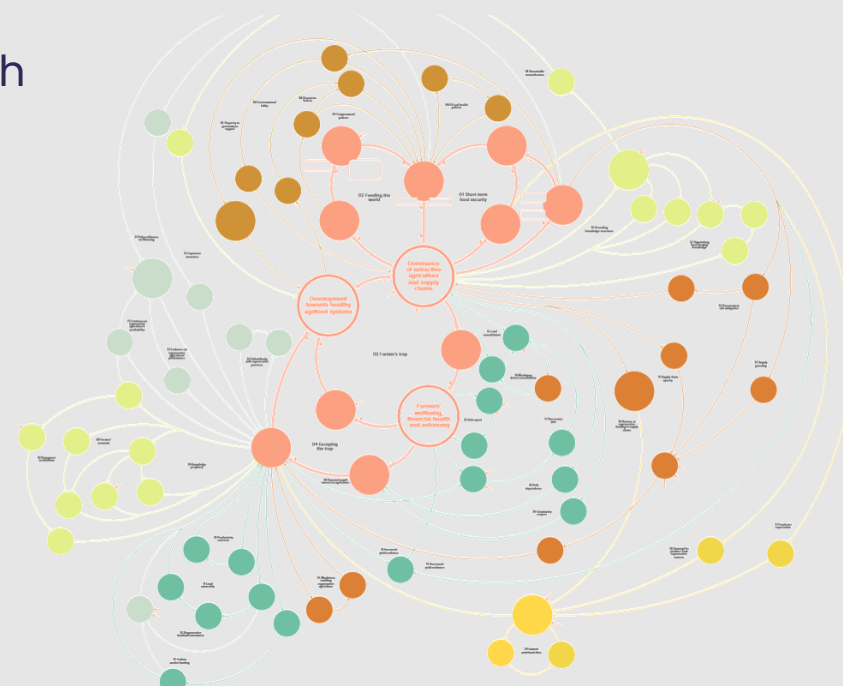
Circular Economic Transitions are Systemic

A reminder from previous modules

In the previous modules, we explored how circular transitions unfold within complex regional systems. Transitions in areas such as construction, packaging, agrifood or textiles involve interconnected elements including:

- Value chains and industrial processes
- Policies and regulations
- Infrastructure and logistics
- Markets and consumer behavior

Because these elements interact, **changes in one part of the system can influence the whole.**



Circular Challenges Require Multiple Interventions

Addressing different parts of the system

Addressing a complex challenge, therefore, requires **different types of interventions working together**. These actions often take place across different domains, such as:

- Skills and capacity building
- Finance and investment
- Policy and regulation
- Culture and behavior
- Technology and innovation

Focusing on one domain is rarely enough to trigger a systemic change towards circularity.



Circular Challenges Require Multiple Interventions

Addressing different parts of the system

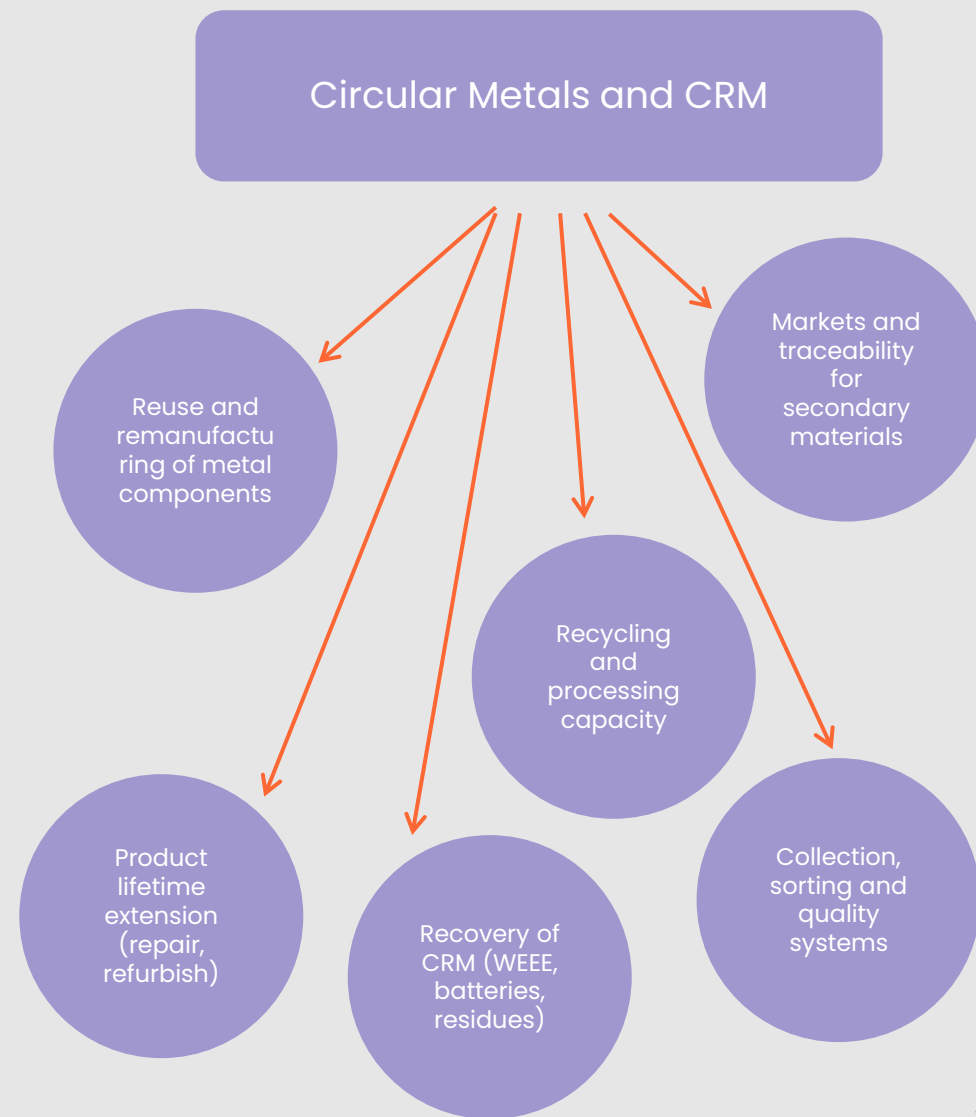
Consider the transition towards **reducing dependence on primary metals and critical raw materials (CRM)**.

Achieving this transition means acting across multiple domains, from policy and technology to behavior and markets.

For example, a region may combine:

- Advanced recycling and recovery technologies
- Policies and incentives for circular metal use
- Reuse and remanufacturing practices
- Markets for secondary materials
- Material traceability systems
- Collection and sorting systems

What matters most is how these actions work together across the system and value chain, not in isolation.



1

Different Roles of Actions

Understanding how actions contribute to change

Once actions are defined across different domains, it is also important to understand the role they play. Not all actions contribute in the same way; they play different roles:

- Some actions create the conditions for change, they **enable change** (e.g., regulation, infrastructure, skills)
- Some actions are exploratory, they **test new solutions or approaches** in specific contexts (e.g., pilots, innovation projects)
- Some actions focus on **scaling and embedding what works**, helping them reach wider adoption (e.g., markets, procurement, standards)

Some roles can contribute to **different levels of change**: from raising awareness and shifting behaviors, to transforming structures and systems.



Making Sense of Actions in your region

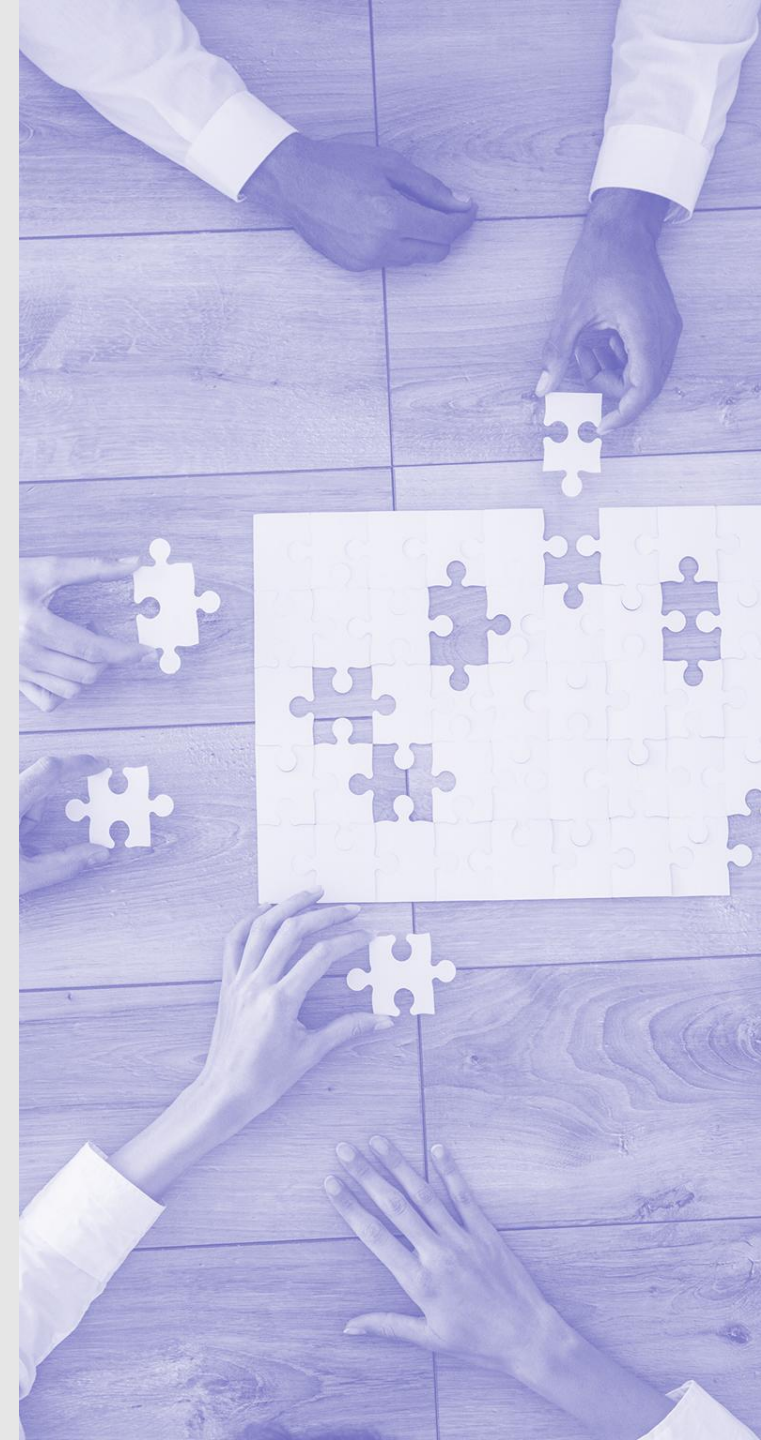
Building on what already exists

In practice, regions are already implementing many different actions across sectors, policy areas and value chains. The challenge is often not the lack of activity, but how to understand, connect and coordinate these efforts.

A coordinated approach does not start from zero. It involves:

- **Identifying existing actions** already contributing to the transition.
- **Connecting and aligning** them where possible
- **Adding new actions** where there are gaps or missing capabilities.

The goal is to combine and strengthen what already exists, while filling the gaps needed to drive systemic change.



A framework to Map and Coordinate Actions

Mapping Actions across the System

To do this, actions can be mapped in a structured way, including both existing initiatives and new ones to be developed. The framework on the right (the Portfolio Canvas) helps you do this. It combines two dimensions:

- **Where you act (horizontal axis):** education, finance, policy, culture/behavior, technology
- **How change happens (vertical axis):** from awareness and behavior change to structural transformation, to pursue not surface-level solutions but systemic, structural shifts.

By placing actions in the canvas, you begin to understand how different efforts are distributed and reflect on how they contribute to change.

	Education	Finance	Policy	Culture / behavior	Technology
awareness capacity building					
behavior change					
structural change					
paradigm shift					

Illustration of a Portfolio Canvas, explained in detail in the guided practical exercise.

What do I do with the Portfolio

Identifying Gaps and Opportunities

When actions are mapped visually, **patterns** begin to emerge. You may notice areas with many initiatives but limited coordination, or domains or levels of change that are underdeveloped, or opportunities to better connect existing actions,...

This makes it easier to:

- **Identify gaps** where new actions may be needed
- **Strengthen connections** between existing initiatives
- **Prioritize efforts** that can unlock wider systemic change.

In the Practice Section of this Module, you will map actions from your own region into your portfolio canvas, starting from your existing plans and initiatives. You can start with the activities captured in your Regional Action Plan.

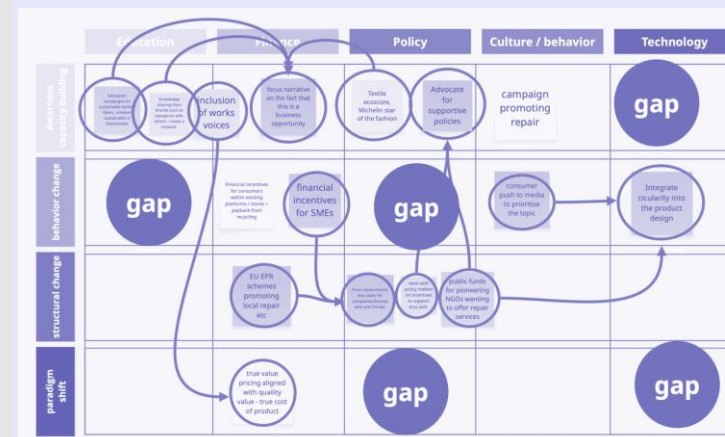
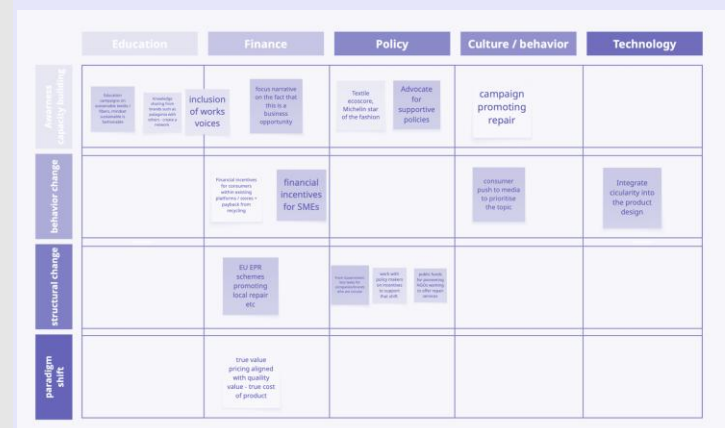


Illustration of a strategic innovation portfolio.

Pause and Reflect

Taking stock of your starting point

1. What is happening in your region?

What circular economy initiatives already exist in your region, related to your Mission (from Module 3)?

(e.g. projects, policies, programmes, stakeholder-led actions,...)

2. What stands out to you?

What types of initiatives or approaches are most visible or developed?

(e.g. innovation projects, policy initiatives, infrastructure, awareness actions,...)

3. Where would you like to go further?

Looking ahead, what area feels most important to strengthen or explore further?

Mission-Governance and Portfolio Orchestration

Coordinating actors and initiatives.

2

2

Why Governance Matters

From fragmentation to coordinated action

Innovation Portfolios bring together many actions across the circular system. Without coordination, these initiatives risk remaining fragmented or working at cross purposes, failing to contribute to systemic change in the circular value chain.

This is not a lack of activity; it is a lack of alignment and direction.

The challenge is not doing more but ensuring that **actions work together as a system.**



2

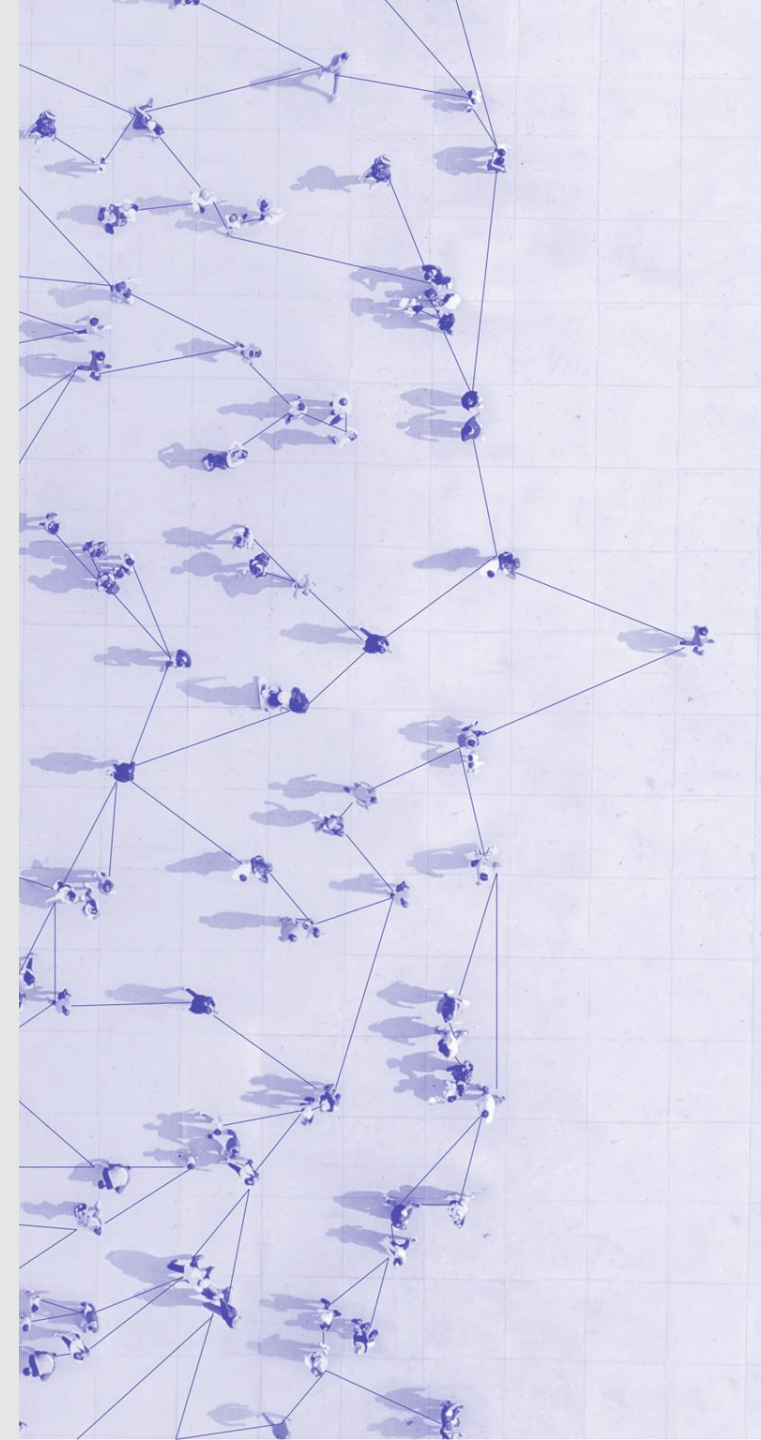
What is Governance for Missions

From coordination to strategic action

Mission governance is how a region **steers a mission and its portfolio of actions at regional levels, over time.**

It provides the structures and processes that ensure initiatives evolve in alignment with a shared direction, through ongoing orchestration of the portfolio. In practice, this means:

- **Setting direction:** defining the mission and the guiding strategic priorities.
- **Aligning actions and actors:** connecting policies, institutions and stakeholders.
- **Coordinating across the system:** linking departments, sectors and levels of government
- **Ensuring accountability and continuity:** clarifying responsibilities, tracking progress and sustaining long-term commitment.



2

Where does Governance happen

Coordinating across departments, levels and stakeholders

In practice, **mission governance** combines three key dimensions:

- **Cross-Departmental (within regional government):** aligning policies and instruments across departments (e.g. environment, industry, innovation).
- **Multi-level Governance:** coordinating with local, national and EU levels to ensure coherence in regulation, funding and strategic direction.
- **Stakeholder coordination:** engaging business, research organisations, civil society in designing and implementing portfolio initiatives.

Governance is not located in one place, but it operates across the whole system.

For Circular Metals and CRM:

Within the Regional Government:

- Department of Environment (waste collection and recovery systems)
- Department of Industry (remanufacturing and secondary material use)
- Department of Innovation (recycling technologies and material traceability)

Across levels of government:

- EU regulations on CRM and product requirements.
- National strategies for resource security and industrial policy
- Municipalities (role in collection, sorting and local recovery systems)

Across stakeholders:

- Recycling companies, manufacturers, technology providers, waste operators, research centres and consumers.

2

Mission Governance in Practice

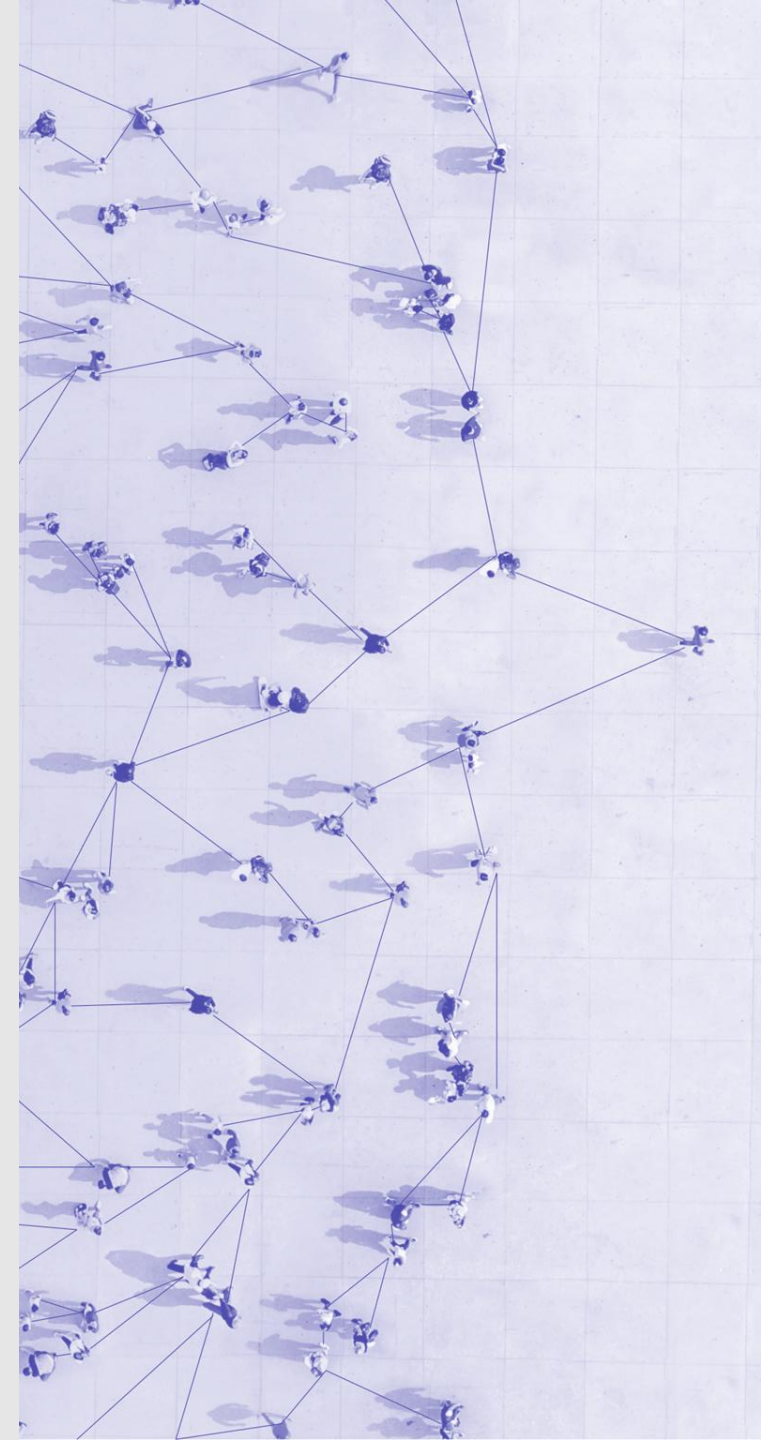
Steering and Orchestrating the Portfolio

Mission governance does not only define direction, but it also ensures that the portfolio Works as a system over time.

In practice, **governance includes the ongoing work of orchestrating initiatives**: connection across sectors and actors, identifying gaps and synergies, and adapting the portfolio as new insights emerge.

This means aligning policies, investments, pilots and stakeholder initiatives so they reinforce each other and contribute to the shared mission.

Governance is not only about setting direction, but about continuously shaping how actions come together in practice, around the shared direction.



2 Mission Governance in Practice

Steering and Orchestrating the Portfolio

In a mission to reduce dependence on primary metals and CRM, different initiatives may already be in place: recycling technologies, collection systems, policies for secondary material use, and support for remanufacturing.

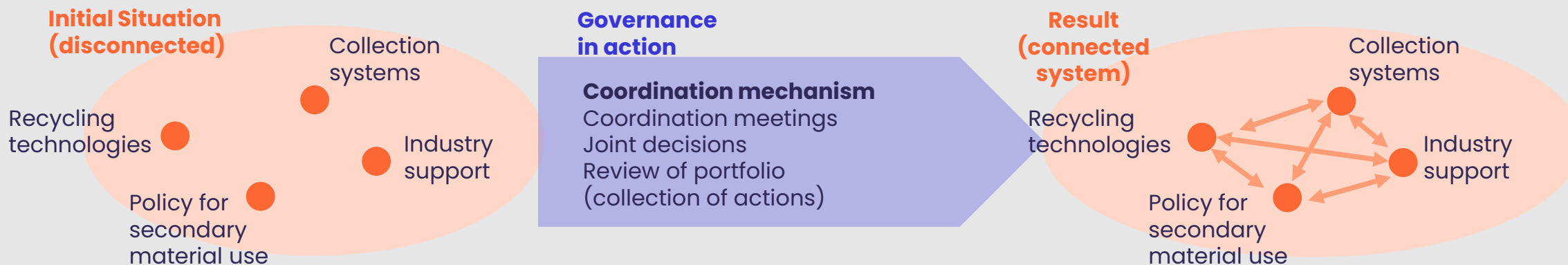
On their own, these efforts evolve separately.

Through governance, they are actively connected and adjusted over time.

For example, regional departments and stakeholders come together regularly to review progress and align actions. They identify that recycling capacity is increasing, but collection systems and market uptake remain limited.

As a result, funding is redirected towards improving collection, policies are adapted to incentivize the use of secondary materials, and industry actors are engaged to scale demand.

This coordination effort is what we mean by governance: turning a set of initiatives (portfolio of actions) into a coordinated system that evolves based on learning.



2

What does governance look like?

Structures and arrangements in practice

Mission governance can take different forms depending on the context, but it typically combines several complementary structures.

Within the regional government, this may include **cross-departmental coordination mechanisms**, such as interdepartmental working groups or steering committees that bring together areas like environment, industry and innovation.

These coordination spaces allow departments to share information, identify gaps or overlaps, and take joint decisions on how to advance the mission, aligning policies, funding and priorities across departments (*for example, linking waste collection and recovery systems, industrial strategies for remanufacturing, and innovation support for recycling technologies to reduce dependence on primary metals and CRM*).



2

What does governance look like?

Structures and arrangements in practice

In some regions, coordination **within the regional government** is formalized through a **dedicated mission or program team**, responsible for coordinating the portfolio over time. **Transition Teams** are one example of this type of coordination mechanism.

They bring together representatives from key areas such as environment, industry and innovation, for example, to actively coordinate initiatives and guide the evolution of the portfolio.

In practice, these teams focus on connection actions, identifying where efforts are not aligned, and taking decisions to adapt the portfolio so that initiatives reinforce each other.

They move beyond alignment, supporting the ongoing orchestration of the mission in practice.



2

What does governance look like?

External Coordination

Mission governance extends **beyond government**, involving coordination with actors across the wider ecosystem.

In practice, this happens through **structured collaboration spaces**, such as industry platforms, cluster meetings, public-private partnerships, innovation networks or joint working groups, where businesses, research organizations, intermediaries and civil society come together regularly.

In many regions, these spaces already exist but are often not connected or aligned around a shared mission.

Within these spaces, actors share insights, identify barriers, coordinate investments and develop joint solutions.

External coordination ensures that the mission is not only governed, but actively shaped and driven across the ecosystem, including those who produce, use and influence materials.



Accountability and Long-term Commitment

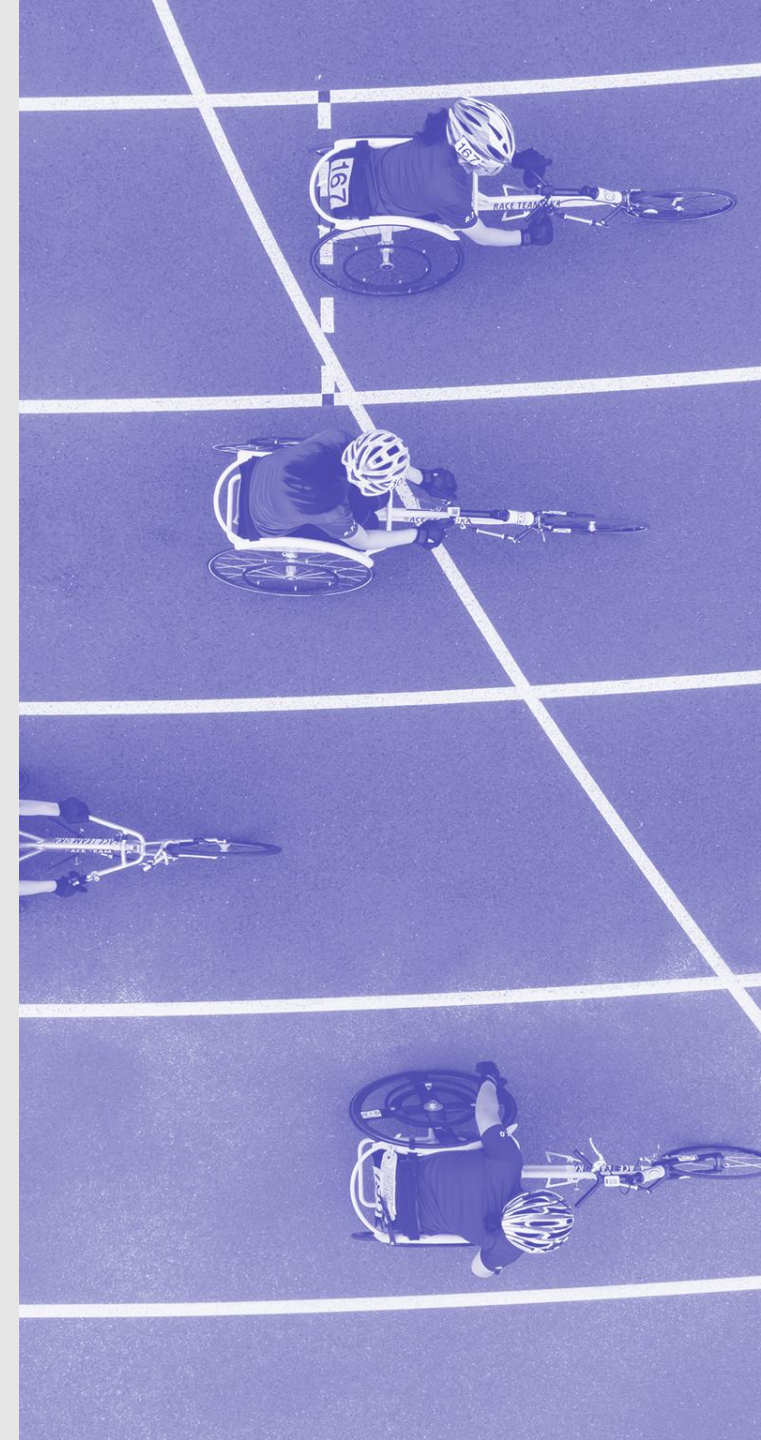
Sustaining Circular Transitions Over Time

Circular economy transitions require sustained effort over many years. They cannot be achieved through short-term projects alone, or in a single political cycle. Mission governance helps establish **clear responsibilities for initiatives and outcomes**, so progress can be tracked and actors remain accountable for their contributions.

In a circular metals transition, this means not only supporting individual projects, but monitoring whether material recovery improves, whether secondary materials are actually used, and whether dependence on primary resources is reduced.

At the same time, it supports **continuity**. As priorities evolve and new insights emerge, it allows regions to adapt their portfolios while maintaining a clear direction.

Sustained transformation depends on whether responsibility is clear, progress is visible, and commitment endures over time.



Pause and Reflect

Connecting governance to your mission portfolio

- **Mapping responsibility:** Who is currently responsible for the key initiatives contributing to your mission? Are responsibilities clearly identified, or fragmented across actors?
(e.g., innovation supports recycling technologies, municipalities manage collection, industry drivers uptake – but no shared ownership of outcomes).
- **Understanding how your portfolio is coordinated:** where and how do different actors come together to align and coordinate actions? Are there spaces or mechanisms (e.g., working groups, transition teams, platforms) that actively connect initiatives?
- **Identifying coordination gaps:** where do you see disconnects between departments, levels of government, or stakeholders? Which areas require stronger coordination?
(e.g., recycling solutions exist, but collection and market uptake are not aligned)
- **Strengthening governance.** What is one concrete action that could improve coordination or alignment in your region?
(e.g., creating a transition team, connecting existing platforms, or establishing regular portfolio review moments)

3

Mobilizing Resources

Aligning resources for circular mission delivery.

Mobilizing resources for system transformation

Beyond funding individual projects

To fund Innovation Portfolios, circular economy transitions require significant and sustained investment across multiple domains – infrastructure, innovation, business models, and behavioral change.

However, the challenge is not only about increasing financial resources, but about mobilizing and aligning them in ways that support systemic change, rather than isolated interventions.

This means shifting from a logic of funding individual projects to **strategically enabling a portfolio of actions over time.**



3

The Shift

From funding projects to financing portfolios

Traditional public funding mechanisms are often designed to support discrete projects, with predefined objectives, timelines, and outputs. While effective for delivery, they can struggle to support uncertainty, experimentation, and adaptation.

Innovation portfolios, by contrast, **require flexible, long-term, and coordinated resource mobilization**, capable of supporting different types of interventions, from early-stage experimentation to large-scale deployment.

This implies a **shift towards blended, staged, and adaptive financing approaches.**



What does mobilizing resources mean?

Public, private and civic contributions

Mobilizing resources involves activating and aligning a broad range of financial sources (public, private and civic) while positioning circular initiatives as attractive investment opportunities.

While grants and subsidies remain important, they are often insufficient to support large-scale transitions. **Regions need to combine complementary financial approaches** – such as blended finance, guarantees or green bonds – to leverage additional resources and reduce risks.

Rather than relying on a single source, the focus is **on using public funding strategically to unlock further investment** and support circular infrastructure, innovation and new business models.

Mobilizing resources means not only accessing funding, but combining and deploying it to enable system-wide change towards more circular value chains



3

Funding Landscape

Where the money comes from

Circular economy transitions are financed through a mix of public, private and civic resources. Circular transitions require combining these sources, not relying on one.

Regions typically can draw on:

Public funding

- EU programs
(ERDF, Horizon Europe)
- National and regional budgets
(e.g., guarantees, public procurement, ...)

Public financial institutions

- Development banks
(guarantees, blended)
- National promotional banks
(loans, guarantees, ...)

Private investment

- Industry (co-investment, blended)
- Venture capital (investment in circular start-ups)
- Impact investors (green bonds, blended)

Financial markets

- Loans (project financing)
- Bonds (green bonds)
- Blended finance structures

Civic and Community Finance

- Citizen investment (crowd-investing)
- Cooperatives (community-owned circular initiatives)
- Local initiatives (local reuse or repair systems)

Financial instruments in practice

Exploring how regions mobilize resources

Regions can draw on a wide range of financial instruments to support circular economy transitions, as we have just seen in the previous slide.

In the following slides, we explore a few examples of how these approaches are used in practice.

These instruments play different roles: from reducing risks, to attracting private investment, to scaling solutions over time. They draw on and combine different sources of finance, from public funding to private investment and community finance, to support circularity.



3

Example 1: Blended Finance

Combining resources to enable scale

What is it?	Where does it come from?	How does it support circular economy?	How can regions activate it?
Blended finance combines public funding with private investment to reduce risk and attract additional capital.	Public sources (EU, national, regional funds) combined with private investors, Banks, or impact funds.	It enables scaling of circular solutions (e.g., reuse systems, recycling infrastructure) that are not yet fully market-ready.	By using public funds strategically to de-risk projects, structure investment-ready pipelines, and partner with financial actors.

3

Example 2: Guarantee Funds

Reducing risk and unlocking private capital

What is it?	Where does it come from?	How does it support circular economy?	How can regions activate it?
A guarantee fund covers part of the losses if a project fails, reducing risk for investors.	Typically, public actors (EU, national governments, public Banks), sometimes with private partners.	It enables financing of innovative or unproven circular projects.	By connecting local projects to existing guarantee schemes and working with financial institutions to facilitate access.

3

Example 3: Crowd-Investing / Citizen Finance

Mobilizing citizens as co-investors

What is it?	Where does it come from?	How does it support circular economy?	How can regions activate it?
Citizens invest directly in projects, combining financial return with impact.	Individual citizens, sometimes matched with public funding.	It supports local initiatives like repair, reuse, and sharing systems.	By creating or supporting local platforms, co-funding campaigns, and enabling community-led projects.

3

Example 4: Green bonds

Mobilizing capital at scale

What is it?	Where does it come from?	How does it support circular economy?	How can regions activate it?
Green bonds raise capital for projects with environmental benefits.	Issued by governments or public agencies, purchased by investors.	It finances large-scale infrastructure such as recycling systems or circular industrial zones.	By issuing bonds directly or partnering with national institutions and building a pipeline of eligible projects.

3

Example 5: Public procurement for circularity

Using demand to drive markets

What is it?	Where does it come from?	How does it support circular economy?	How can regions activate it?
Public authorities use procurement to demand circular products and services.	Public budgets through purchasing processes.	It creates stable demand for circular solutions, helping markets grow.	By embedding circular criterion in tenders, training procurement teams, and coordinating demand across departments.

3

What is an Investment Case

From funding needs to investment opportunities

Mobilizing resources is not only about accessing funding, it is about making circular economy initiatives investable.

An investment case explains why a circular initiative creates value, not only in environmental terms, but also in economic and strategic terms. It connects circularity goals with concrete benefits such as cost savings, new market opportunities, reduced dependency on primary materials, and increased resilience.

In a circular metals transition, for example, improving material recovery does not only reduce waste, but it can also lower import dependency and create new industrial opportunities around secondary materials.

A strong investment case translates a circular ambition into a value proposition that others are willing to invest in.



3

Building an Investment Case

Turning circular initiatives into investable opportunities

Building an investment case means moving from an idea to a clear and credible proposition. In practice, this involves:

- **Defining the opportunity:** what problem are you addressing, and what solutions are you proposing?
- **Identifying who benefits and who invests:** who gains value (e.g., industry, municipalities, citizens), and who could finance the solution?
- **Clarifying costs, risks and returns:** what are the upfront investments, what risks exist, and how are they reduced?
- **Positioning within the portfolio:** how does this initiative connect with others (e.g., policy, infrastructure, demand) to increase its viability?
- **Using public funding strategically:** can it de-risk the initiative or crowd in private investment?

A strong investment case makes circular initiatives understandable, credible, and attractive to investors.



Pause and Reflect

Building an Invest

1. Mapping current funding

How are current circular economy initiatives in your region funded?

(e.g., mainly short-term public grants, with limited private or long-term investment)

2. Identifying gaps and mismatches

Where do existing funding approaches fall short in supporting more systemic change?

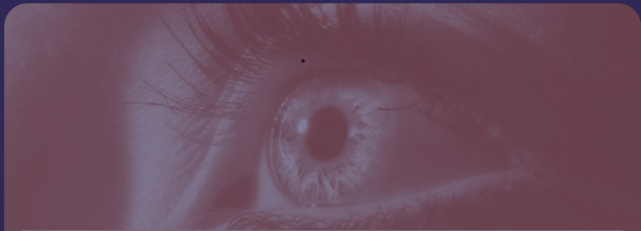
(e.g., innovation is funded, but scaling or infrastructure is not; actors invest separately without coordination)

3. Shifting towards a strategy

What is one step your region could take to better align or combine funding?

(e.g., linking funding across departments, or combining public funding with private investment)

Structure of the Module



I

Conceptual framing

Introduction to **key concepts** related to innovation portfolios for mission implementation, including governance and resource mobilisation.



II

Guided practice

A **self-guided activity** exploring how initiatives in your region could form a mission portfolio.



III

Seeds of change from regions

Short **examples** showing how missions portfolios are implemented in practice.

From Learning to Action

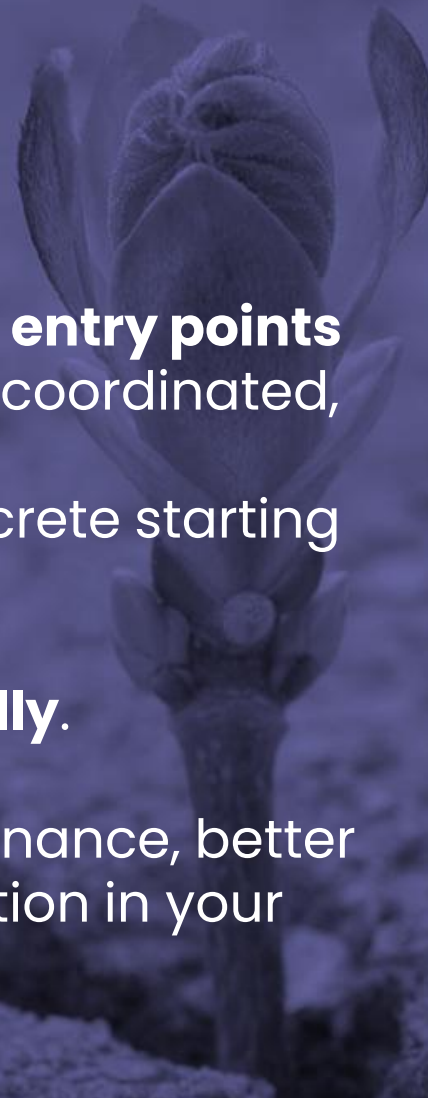
What can **I** start doing in my region – **now**?

In the following slides you will find **practical entry points** to begin strengthening how your mission is coordinated, resourced and supported.

These are not large-scale reforms, but concrete starting actions you can activate immediately.

Feel free to start small but **think systemically**.

Each action can help unlock stronger governance, better resource flows, and greater collective direction in your mission portfolio.



Practical Actions You Can Take

Step 1. Build on your Mission and Pathways

Purpose: To anchor the portfolio in a shared direction and emerging pathways

Who: Core team (internal)

How: Internal reflection / working session

Start from:

- Your mission direction (Module 3)
- Your identified pathways and milestones

Ask:

- What directions and pathways are we trying to activate?
- What types of change do we want to enable?

Tools: Outputs from Module 3

This step helps ensure that the **portfolio builds on a clear direction**, rather than starting from isolated ideas.

Step 2. Map and Shape your Innovation Portfolio

Purpose: To make current activity visible and begin shaping a coherent portfolio

Who: Core team + selected stakeholders (*e.g., regional departments of environment, industry, innovation, infrastructure; agencies managing funding or programs; clusters, hubs, and key intermediaries, ...*)

How: Portfolio Mapping Session (3-4h or progressive shorter working sessions)

Map and explore:

- Existing initiatives (projects, policies, programs, funding, actors)
- How they relate to each other
- Where there are gaps, overlaps, or disconnects

Ask:

- What is already happening?
- Where are we concentrated?
- What is missing or not connected?

Tools: Portfolio Canvas (explained in detail later in this Module), Portfolio Cube, ...

This step helps turn a fragmented set of initiatives into a structured view of the emerging portfolio and where it needs to evolve.

Step 3. Prioritize and move to action

Purpose: To activate the portfolio in practice

Who: Core team + decision-makers + implementers

Bring in: funding bodies, managing authorities, public Banks or financial actors,
owners, political representatives (where relevant)

How: Prioritization and coordination discussion.

Define :

- What to start with
- Who is involved
- How it will be supported

Ask:

- What are the most strategic entry points?
- What can we activate now?

Tools: Prioritization tools

This step helps translate the portfolio into concrete actions that can be activated and coordinated over time.

**Transformation does not happen
through isolated projects –
it is orchestrated across initiatives,
actors and resources**

Practical Tools for Innovation Portfolios

The previous steps outlined **what** is a portfolio.

Now we introduce a tool to help you understand **how to structure a portfolio: the Portfolio Canvas**.

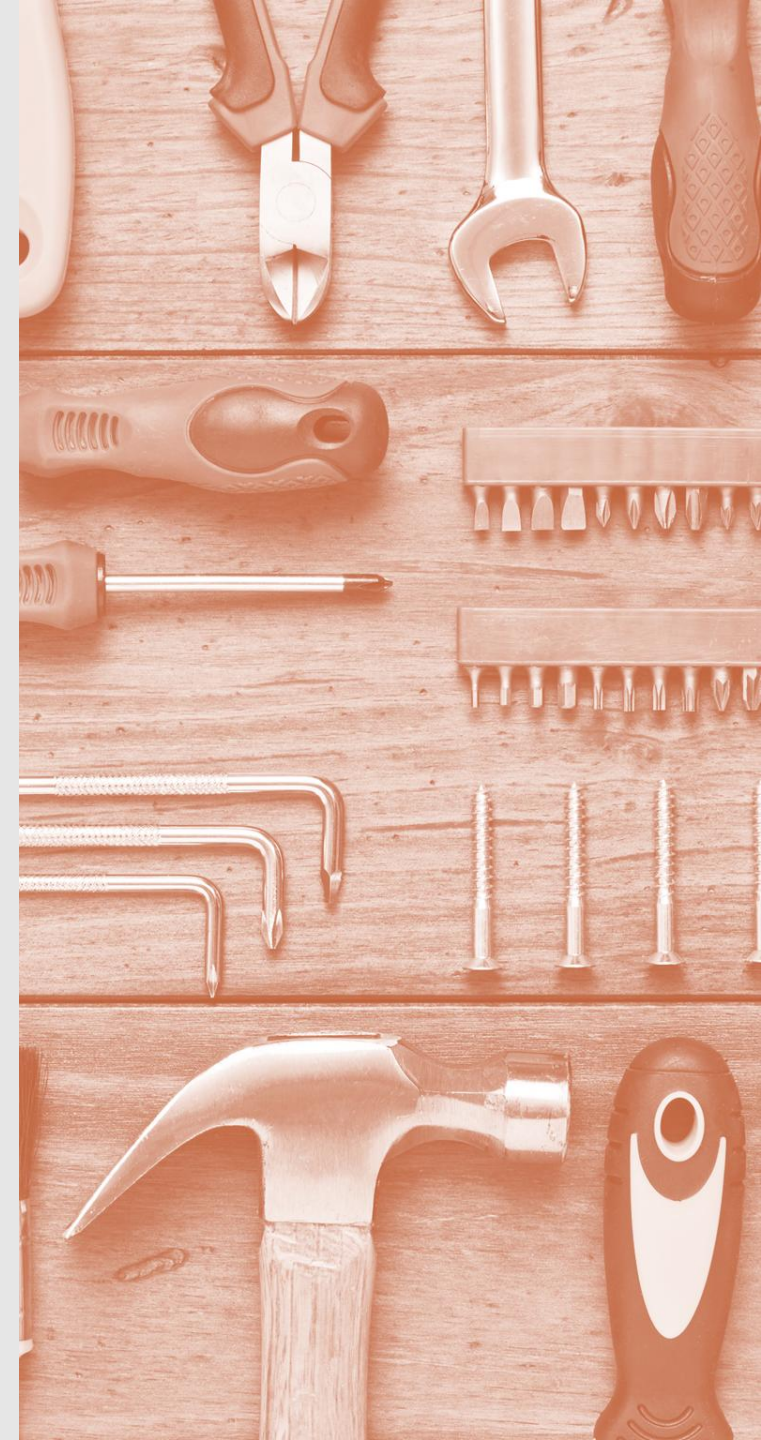
There is no one single way to create an innovation portfolio, here we present one tool that can support regional authorities in mapping their Innovation Portfolios.

Let's unpack it in the following slides.

Start by recalling your regional Mission (from Module 3) or define an area of focus for your regional circular transition.

For example : Textiles in Circularity

All canvases can be found in this [Miro board](#).



	Education	Finance	Policy	Culture / behavior	Technology
Awarness capacity building					
behavior change					
structural change					
paradigm shift					

Introduce the categories – first **AXIS** of our portfolio design

To develop a portfolio mapping exercise, we use at least **two axes**. These axes represent key features of your system for which you can design interventions.

In this example, our first (horizontal) axes refers to five different **thematic areas where different types of interventions can be developed**.

For simplicity, we have included only five areas, but we could also think of other thematic areas such as behavioral change, community-led interventions, etc.

Education

Finance

Policy

Culture / behavior

Technology

Different types of innovation actions that develop capacities – second AXIS

The second axis reflects **how different actions contribute to building capacities for regional circular transitions.**

Each thematic area (first axis) will require a specific combination of capacities to enable systemic transformation towards circularity.

**Check Module 1–Iceberg Model*

Awareness
capacity building

Building skills, knowledge, tools for **awareness, capability and advocacy**

behavior change

Elements of the system are changing, and **people start adapting their behavior**

structural change

Better **structures are designed (or existing ones connected)** to address multiple levers of the system

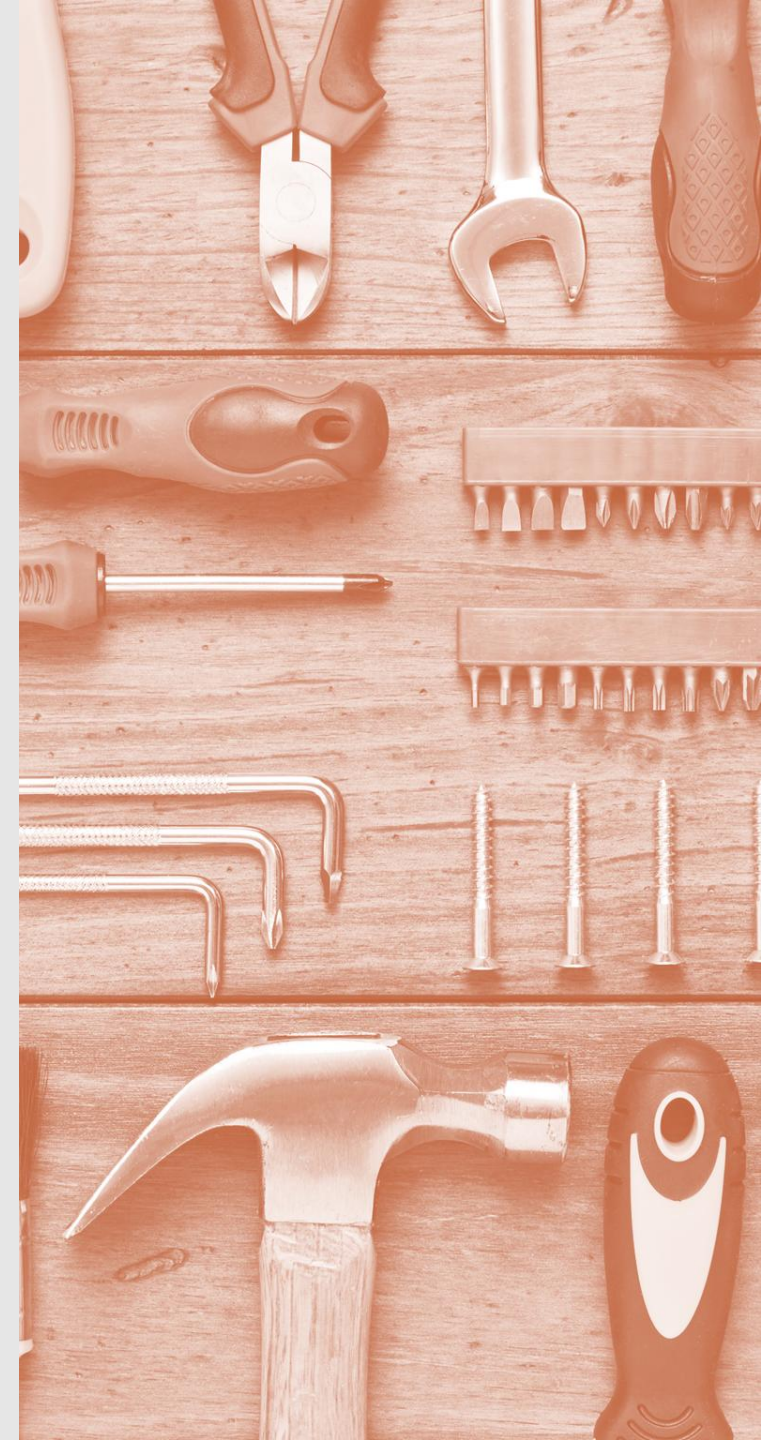
paradigm
shift

Underlying assumptions, mindsets, and rules begin to change; conditions for change are created (i.e.. rules, roles of institutions, etc.).

Step-by-step guide to using the Portfolio Canvas

Steps:

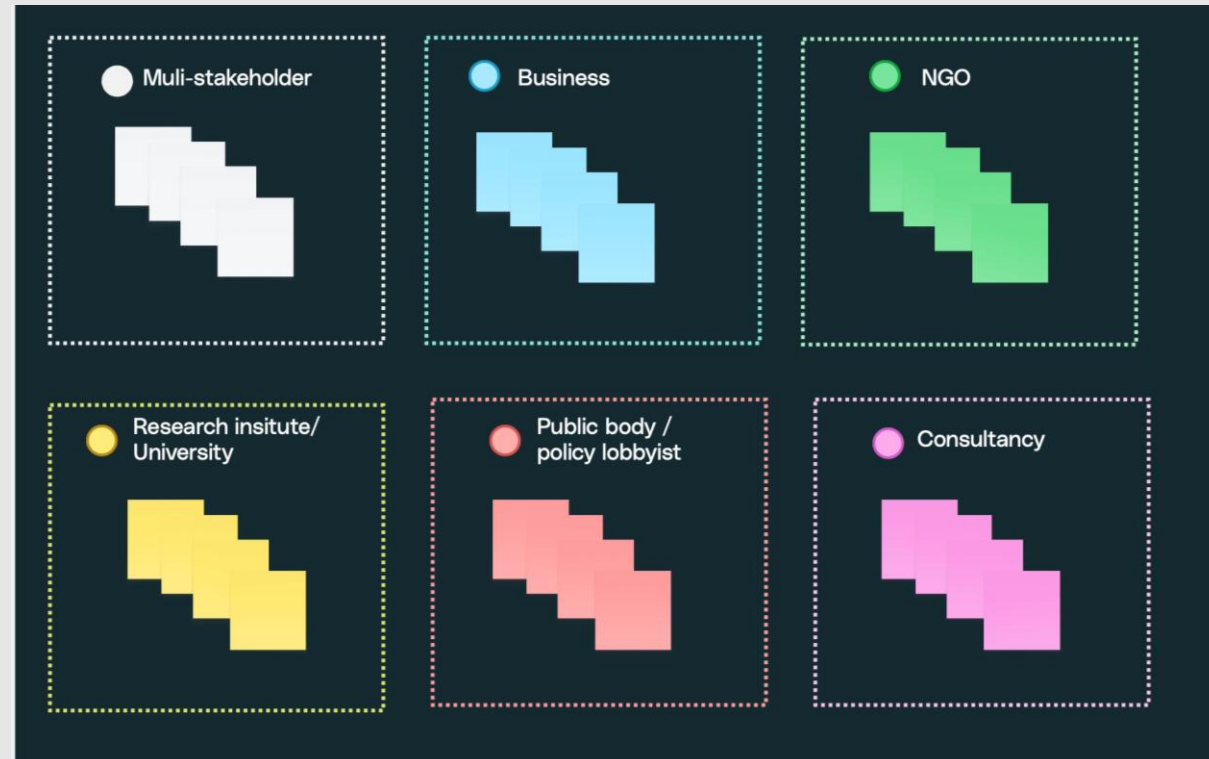
- 1. Map the current situation:** Identify the current projects / events / programs / policies
- 2. Identify:** synergies and gaps emerging from this mapping
- 3. Co-creation of innovative actions:** co-develop new interventions to address identified gaps and opportunities
- . Activate the portfolio:** reflect on which actions can best activate and strengthen the portfolio



STEP 1 Map the current situation:

- Identify the current projects – events – programs – policies related to the thematic sectors (axis 1).
- The mapping should be done according to the typology of stakeholder implementing such activity.

Example: *Textiles in Circularity*
(have a look at next slide)



	Education	Finance	Policy	Culture / behavior	Technology
Awareness capacity building	Education campaigns on sustainable textile / fibers, mindset sustainable is fashionable Knowledge sharing from brands such as patagonia with others - create a network inclusion of works voices focus narrative on the fact that this is a business opportunity		Textile ecoscore, Michelin star of the fashion Advocate for supportive policies	campaign promoting repair	
behavior change		Financial incentives for consumers within existing platforms / stores + payback from recycling financial incentives for SMEs		consumer push to media to prioritise the topic	Integrate circularity into the product design
structural change		EU EPR schemes promoting local repair etc	From Government: less taxes for companies/brands who are circular work with policy makers on incentives to support that shift public funds for pioneering NGOs wanting to offer repair services		
paradigm shift		true value pricing aligned with quality value - true cost of product			

STEP 2 Identify

identify: synergies and gaps that can emerge from the mapping.

Synergies occur when two or more initiatives, if connected, would produce a result greater than the sum of their parts. Look for these three types:

- **Resource Synergies:** Does a **Policy** (e.g., Extended Producer Responsibility) provide the funding or legal framework that a struggling **Project** (e.g., a textile recycling facility) needs to scale?
- **Knowledge Synergies:** Does an **Event** (e.g., a sustainable fashion summit) generate data or networking that could solve a technical bottleneck in a **Program** (e.g., a bio-fiber R&D pilot)?
- **Operational Synergies:** Are there two **Projects** working on the same thing (e.g., cotton recycling) in different regions that could share supply chains to reduce logistics costs?

The "Synergy Question" to ask: *"If Project A and Policy B collaborated tomorrow, would it remove a major barrier for both?"*

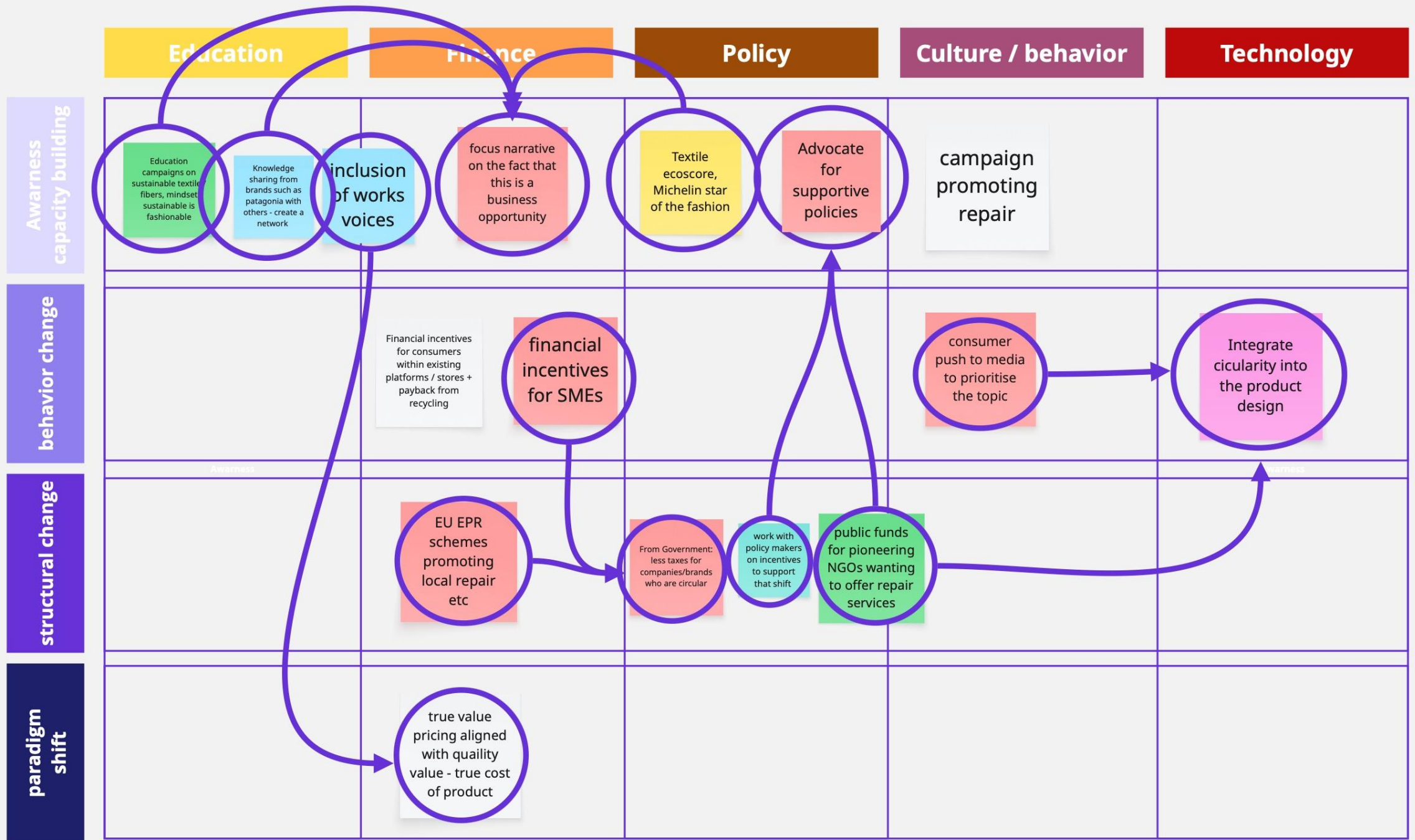
STEP 2 Identify

identify: synergies and gaps that can emerge from the mapping.

Practical Steps for Your Mapping

To make this actionable:

- **Draw the "Strings":** Physically or digitally draw lines between a Policy and a Project it supports. If a Project has no lines connecting it to a Policy or an Event, it is **Isolated** (a synergy opportunity).



Example – Circular Textiles

List of Systemic Connections (Synergies)

These represent existing momentum where one initiative strengthens another.

- **Policy-to-Infrastructure Link:** The connection between "**Advocating for supportive policies**" and "**Public funds for pioneering NGOs**" suggests a path where lobbying successfully unlocks capital for local repair services.
- **Knowledge-to-Market Link:** The synergy between "**Knowledge sharing from brands**" and the "**Narrative of business opportunity**" creates a mindset shift that circularity is profitable, not just philanthropic.
- **Design-to-Consumer Loop:** The link between "**Integrating circularity into product design**" and "**Consumer push to prioritize the topic**" creates a demand-supply pull for sustainable goods.
- **The Regulatory Backbone:** The connection from "**EU EPR schemes**" (Extended Producer Responsibility) to "**Structural Change**" acts as the primary legal driver for all repair and collection initiatives.

STEP 2 Identify

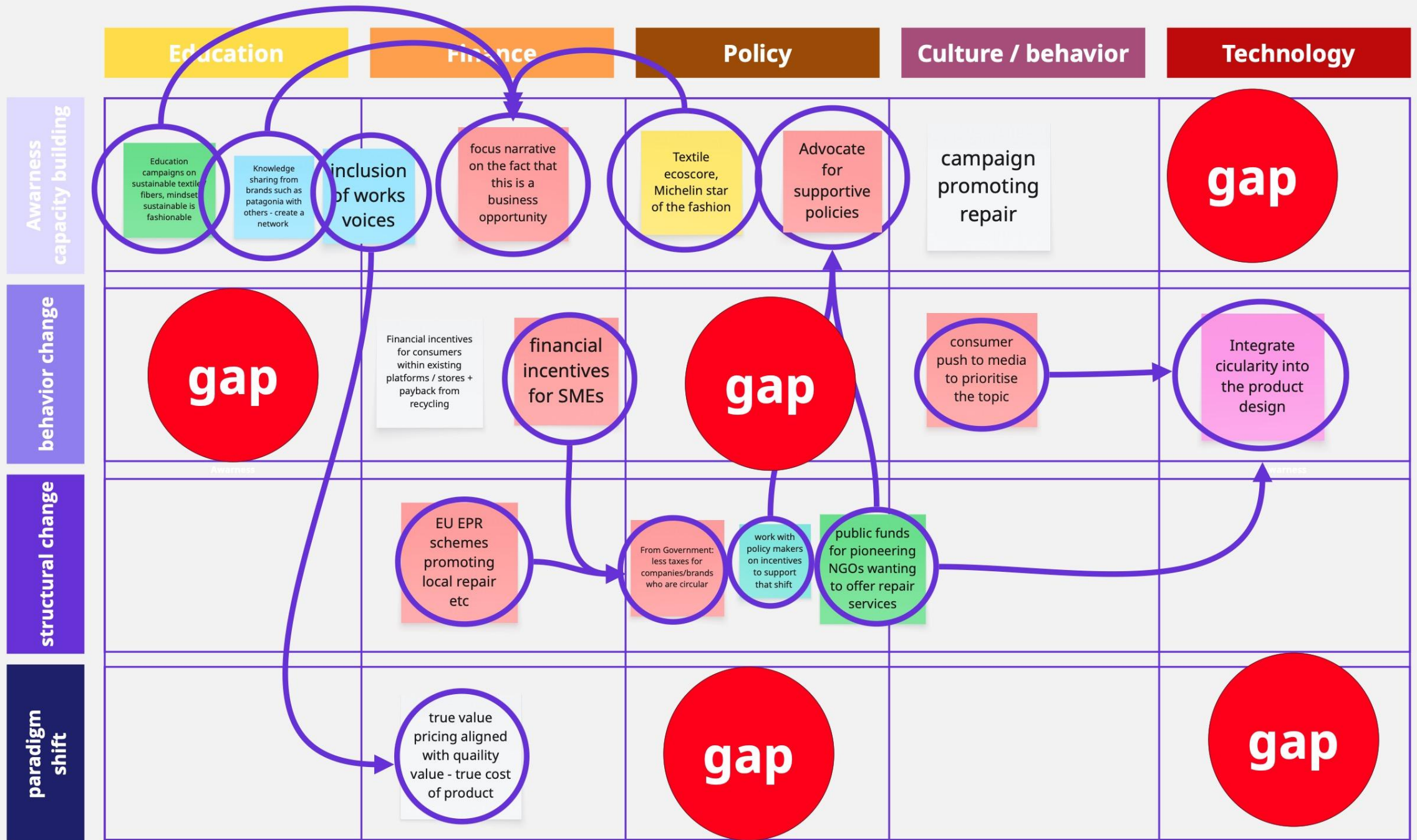
identify: synergies and gaps that can emerge from the mapping.

Gaps are the "potholes" in the circular transition.

How to spot them:

- **Value Chain Gaps:** You have many "Sustainable Design" programs but zero "Industrial Textile Collection" projects. The loop is broken at the collection phase.
- **Policy Gaps:** You have great recycling projects, but no **Policy** that makes virgin polyester more expensive. Without this, the projects will never be financially competitive.
- **Scaling Gaps:** You have many small-scale "Pilot Projects" but no "Infrastructure Programs" to take them to a city-wide or national level.

The "Gap Question" to ask: *"What is preventing a discarded t-shirt from becoming a new t-shirt in this specific ecosystem? Is it a lack of tech, a lack of law, or a lack of awareness?"*



Example – Circular Textiles

List of Systemic Gaps

These are the "black holes" in your map where the circular flow breaks down.

- **The Technology Desert:** *There is a massive gap in **Technology for Awareness and Capacity Building**. There are no digital tools listed for transparency or consumer education.*
- **Missing Structural Education:** *While there is "Awareness" education, there is a gap in **Structural/Technical Training** for the workforce to perform the repairs or recycling at scale.*
- **Behavioral Policy Void:** *There is no specific **Policy** aimed at **Behavior Change**. We are advocating for general policies, but nothing specifically targets changing "fast fashion" consumption habits.*
- **Paradigm Shift Isolation:** *The "**True value pricing**" node is currently isolated. Without a connection to Finance or Technology (like blockchain for traceability), it remains a theoretical concept rather than a market reality.*

STEP 3 Co-creation of innovative actions

This step transforms the static mapping of synergies and gaps into a dynamic **Portfolio of Innovative Actions** by facilitating a co-creation session where stakeholders design collaborative projects and policies to bridge system disconnects.

Steps for Co-creation:

- Organize, plan and host a co-creation session
- What materials are needed?
 - Mapping current situation (Canvas provided)
 - Mapping of stakeholders
- Who should attend?
 - From the stakeholder mapping results (including the ones that are on the gaps)

STEP 3 Co-creation of innovative actions

How to run the co-creation session

Before the session starts, you must translate the visual map into **Actions**. You don't just show a gap; you present it as a problem to be solved through co-creation.

1. Translate Findings into "How Might We?"

Take your identified Gaps and Synergies and turn them into the "WHY":

- **For a Gap:** "We have a gap in textile collection. How might we create a new program to bridge this?"
- **For a Synergy:** "We have a policy and a recycling project that aren't talking. How might we align them into a single strategic action?"

2. Present mapping

- The Bridge: Show the physical map. Use Color Coding:
 - Green Zones: Areas where projects and policies are already working (Synergies).
 - Red Zones: Areas where nothing is happening (Gaps).

STEP 3 Co-creation of innovative actions

3. Open space for inputs

The Bridge: Ask the crowd: "Did we miss a project? Is there a policy we didn't see?"

Action: Ensure the map is 100% accurate before moving to innovation.

4. Reflection session on Gaps and Synchs

Discuss and co-create

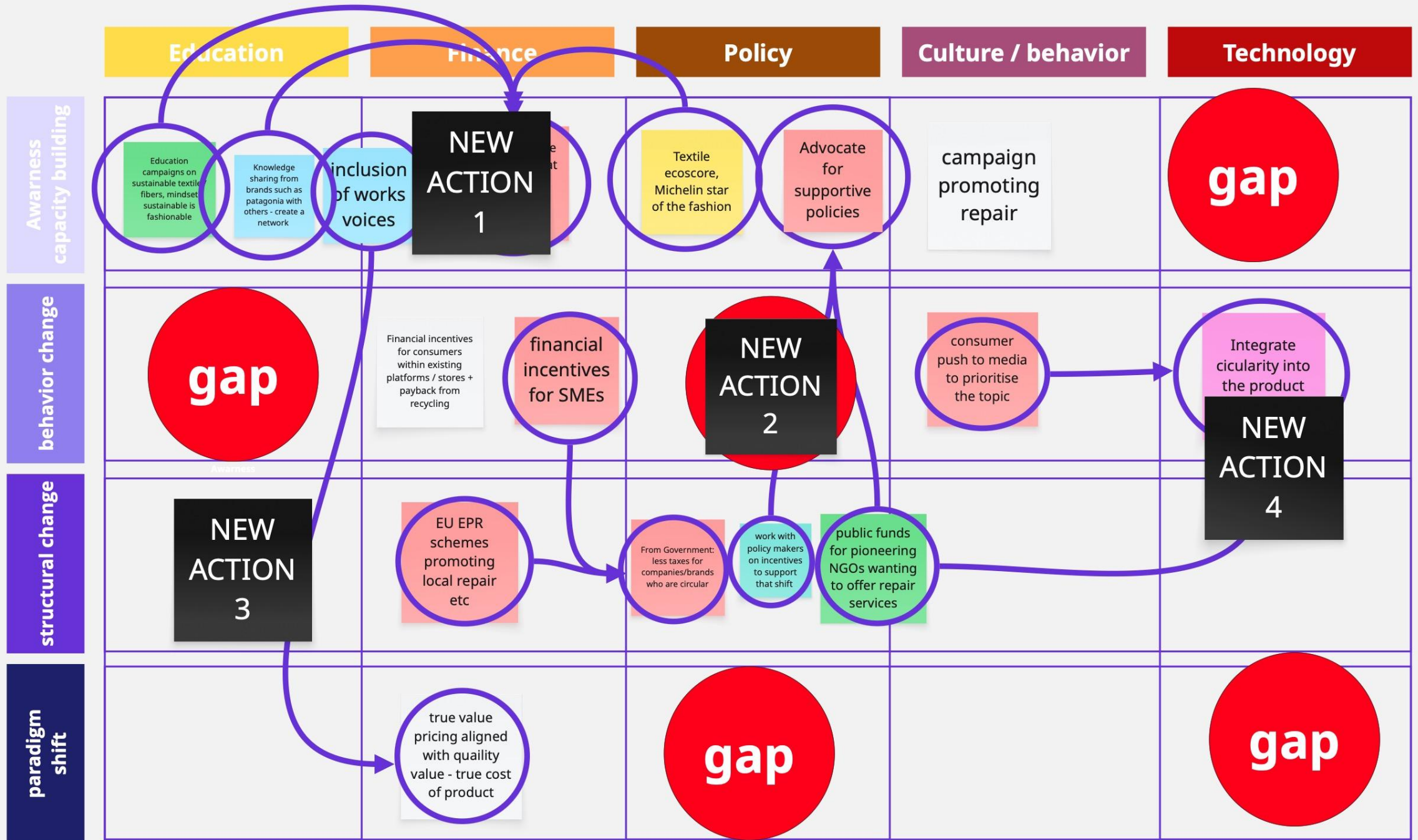
Gap Fillers Action: The job is to design a **Missing Program** for a red zone.

Connectors Action : The job is to design a **Policy/Event/program** that links two existing projects.

5. New innovative actions for the Portfolio

The Bridge: This is the output. Every "Action" created must either **Fill a Gap** or **Activate a Synergy**.

- **Format:** Each action needs a Lead Stakeholder, a Timeline, and a Resource requirement.



STEP 4. Activate the portfolio: Reflect on what OPTION should activate the portfolio

This step moves from design to reality by selecting high-impact **Strategic Options** to launch the portfolio, establishing the governance, resource commitments, and iterative learning loops necessary to sustain long-term systemic change.

Headline: Moving from Idea to Implementation

Before launching, we must filter our "Innovative Actions" to ensure they are resilient and impactful. We activate based on three "Option Filters":

- **Filter 1: Strategic Fit (The 'Why')** Does this action directly fill a critical **Gap** or leverage a high-value **Synergy** identified in our map?
- **Filter 2: Technical Feasibility & Resources** Do we have the stakeholder commitment, budget, and policy "wind in our sails" to start now?
- **Filter 3: Systemic Impact** Is this a "one-off" project, or will it create a ripple effect that strengthens the rest of the textile ecosystem?

STEP 4. Activate the portfolio: Reflect on what OPTION should activate the portfolio

Example Portfolio of New Strategic Actions

1. The Anchor Actions (Long-term Systemic Foundation)

- **Action: The "Circular Textile Tax Reform":** (Policy + Finance) A structural policy shift to reduce labor taxes for repair services while increasing taxes on virgin synthetic fiber imports.
- **Action: National Circularity Data Hub:** (Technology + Paradigm Shift) Developing the digital infrastructure for "Digital Product Passports" to enable true-value pricing and full lifecycle traceability.

2. The Quick-Win Actions (Immediate Momentum)

- **Action: The "Repair is Fashionable" Pop-up Series:** (Education + Culture) A high-visibility event series in major cities pairing top designers with local repair NGOs to "upcycle" consumer waste on-site.
- **Action: SME Circular Voucher Program:** (Finance + Behavior) Small, fast-track grants for local boutiques to implement take-back schemes or small-scale sorting tech.

3. The Connectivity Actions (Bridging Stakeholders)

- **Action: The "Fiber Exchange" Multi-stakeholder Platform:** (Business + NGO + Research) A digital marketplace where NGOs collecting textile waste can sell sorted feedstock directly to businesses/researchers for bio-fiber development.
- **Action: The "Circular Policy Lab":** (Public Body + Consultancy) A recurring collaborative space where policy lobbyists and businesses co-design the "Ecoscore" criteria to ensure they are technically feasible and economically viable.

STEP 5. Activate the portfolio: Reflect on what **OPTION** should activate the portfolio

Identifying the Minimum Viable Portfolio

We don't activate everything at once. We choose the "Options" that act as the foundation for the iterative process.

- **The "Anchor" Option:** One high-impact **Policy** or **Large Program** that provides the legal or financial framework for other actions.
- **The "Quick Win" Option:** A smaller **Project** or **Event** that can be launched within 3–6 months to build momentum and prove the portfolio's value.
- **The "Connectivity" Option:** A collaborative action that brings together at least three different stakeholder groups to ensure "Collective Thinking" happens from day one.

STEP 5. Activate the portfolio: Reflect on what **OPTION** should activate the portfolio

Securing the Future of the Portfolio

Activation is not a single event; it is the start of a cycle. To "Secure Resources" and "Divide Responsibilities," we must agree on:

- **The Stewardship Model:** Who is the "Portfolio Manager" responsible for keeping the synergies alive between workshops?
- **The Feedback Rhythm:** How often do we return to the **Learning Sessions** to observe what is working and what still needs to be adjusted?
- **Resource Commitment:** A formal agreement on how each institution contributes (Time, Funding, or Infrastructure) to ensure Infrastructure to ensure the actions don't stall after the first workshop.



Other activities and resources

Resources

Essential resources:

- System change: A guidebook for adopting Portfolio Approaches (UNDP, 2022). A practical guide to designing portfolios for systemic change. Read [here](#).
- Portfolios (UNDP Unstuck). A short introduction to portfolios as connected options for learning and change. Read [here](#).
- Proactive Portfolio Management in Mission-Oriented Innovation Policy (OECD, 2025). An advanced paper on managing mission portfolios over time. Read [here](#).

Recommended:

- Innovation Portfolios (OECD OPSI). A public-sector overview of how to organize innovation activities as a portfolio. Read [here](#).
- MOTION Handbook (Matti et al., 2021). A practical resource linking portfolios, Theory of Change and learning. Read [here](#).

Structure of the Module

I

Conceptual framing

Introduction to **key concepts** related to innovation portfolios for mission implementation, including governance and resource mobilisation.

II

Guided practice

A **self-guided activity** exploring how initiatives in your region could form a mission portfolio.

III

Seeds of change from regions

Short **examples** showing how missions portfolios are implemented in practice.

Case Study:

BLU-ER: Regional Strategic Forum on the Blue Economy

Link to the website: [BLUE ECOSYSTEM PROJECT](#)



Key Information

- **Region:** *Emilia-Romagna Region.*
- **Country:** *Italy*
- **Promoter:** *Regional Government, Department of Innovation.*
- **Partnership:** *Regional stakeholders for the Blue Economy (industry, institutional, NGO, associative, research and academic actors).*
- **Time-framework:** *2024-2026.*
- **Budget:** *Staff And Networking Activities 100.000 Euro*
- **Team:** *41 participants for BLU-ER + 21 people in inter-departmental "Blue Economy" group*

Overall Strategy:

Overarching Strategy/Project:

BLU-ER is the regional community designed to facilitate the active participation of the Emilia-Romagna stakeholders in the Blue Economy. It is open to all actors of the regional research and innovation ecosystem working on topics relevant to the Blue Economy, with the aim of fostering collaborative research activities and providing continuous policy insights and operational recommendations.

Its mission is to support the implementation of the **Smart Specialization Strategy (S3)** specifically in the Blue Economy domain, helping to bring together fragmented stakeholders and initiatives under shared thematic priorities. By doing so, BLU-ER strengthens coordination, acceleration knowledge exchange, and promotes the emergence of integrated, cross-sectoral initiatives for more **Sustainable Blue Economy**.

In this framework, a Cooperation Working Arrangement has been signed between the **EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters”** and the Emilia-Romagna Regional Directorate for Research. The agreement reflects the shared commitment to reinforce collaboration across multiple areas of research and sustainable development related to oceans and waters, thereby contributing to the achievement of the Mission’s objectives and overall ambition.

Overall Strategy:

The Regional S3 Thematic Focus:

- 1) **Blue Bioeconomy**
- 2) **Marine Manufacturing and Renewable Energy**
- 3) **Coastal Zone and Tourism 2.0**

Impact:

Initiating collaborative research activities, suggesting policies and action tools, on an ongoing basis, for more effective implementation of the Smart Specialization Strategy (S3). In fact, it represents the **platform for the implementation of the TRAIN LAB of Emilia-Romagna (BLUE ECOSYSTEM PROJECT)** as a transformative innovation hub for sustainable blue economy. The main goal of the co-design workshop is to identify the challenges and priority actions to be implemented at regional level through the involvement and collaboration of stakeholders in co-design and co-creation activities, to focus on key sectors.

Partnership approach:

The partnership approach is grounded in the active engagement of **Quintuple Helix** stakeholders to identify complex challenges and co-design potential actions. This innovation model is based on the interaction among five key societal sectors—academia, industry, public institutions, civil society, and environmental sustainability. By integrating these perspectives, it promotes a systemic and inclusive approach to innovation, capable of addressing multifaceted issues and generating shared, long-term value.

Focus Activity: Co-Designing challenges and priority actions

The highlighted activity is the **BLU-ER Forum and the TRAIN LAB pathway**, developed within the [Blue Ecosystem project](#), using a co-design methodology to engage stakeholders and jointly define regional challenges of the Blue Sustainable Economy.



The process unfolds through clear and progressive steps:

- **Kick-off and group formation:** establishment of the Interdepartmental Blue Economy Group and launch of the Call for Interest to form the Forum (now 41 members).
- **Initial meetings:** first exchanges to share competences, ongoing initiatives, common goals and the TRAIN LAB approach.
- **Co-design workshops:** using a *Canvas Model* where each stakeholder contributed post-its to map problems, limits, challenges and priority actions across the three S3 themes -during Ecomondo Fair 2024.
- **Analysis and synthesis:** collection and interpretation of contributions (post-its, notes, maps) to consolidate shared challenges and actions.
- **Call for Solutions and Acceleration Process:** search for concrete solutions and thematic focus groups to refine them.
- **Transnational networking:** exchange among European TRAIN LABs.
- **Impact assessment:** exploratory surveys at mid-term and final stage.

Focus Activity:

Co-Designing challenges and priority actions



Purpose

- **Engage** the quintuple helix stakeholders in a structured participatory process.
- Define regional **priorities** and generate innovative, shared **solutions**.
- Strengthen **governance**, collaboration and a common vision for the Blue Economy.



Impact

- Shared identification of regional challenges.
- Bottom-up and innovative solutions.
- Increased awareness and cooperation among regional and transnational actors.
- A more cohesive ecosystem capable of transformative innovation.



Who is involved

- Promoter: Interdepartmental Blue Economy Group – Emilia-Romagna Region.
- Participants: members of the BLU-ER Forum + quintuple helix stakeholders.
- Partners: regional actors, TRAIN LAB participants, transnational partners of Blue Ecosystem Project.

Focus Activity: Co-Designing challenges and priority actions

BIOECONOMIA BLU - MANIFATTURA MARINA - FASCIA COSTIERA E TURISMO			
Contesto Quali sono le principali criticità che identifichi? 	Impatti negativi Quali sono gli impatti negativi delle criticità identificate? 	Background Che cosa è già stato fatto? Quali azioni già intraprese? 	Limiti Quali limiti identifichi all'interno di queste azioni? 
Sfide Quali sono le principali sfide da affrontare? 	Azioni prioritarie Quali sono le azioni necessarie per affrontare le sfide identificate? 	Stakeholder Chi sono gli attori della Splice e chi coinvolgi da coinvolgere? 	Risorse Quali risorse vanno messe in campo? Dove reperirle? 


BLUE ECOSYSTEM


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ART-ER
ATTIVITÀ
RISORSE
TERRITORIO

Focus Activity: Co-Designing challenges and priority actions



Focus Activity: Co-Designing challenges and priority actions

Timeline:

1. Launch of the Call for Solutions

20 June 2025 – Call launch + Infoday

20 June – 22 July 2025 – Application period

38 applications received, **37 admitted**

September 2025 – Preliminary evaluation and thematic clustering

2. TRAIN LAB Acceleration Path

Three thematic sessions designed to strengthen existing proposals and foster integration:

- 8 October 2025 – Marine Manufacturing (Tecnopolo Bologna)
- 15 October 2025 – Coast & Tourism 2.0 (Regione Emilia-Romagna – Sala C)
- 29 October 2025 – Blue Bioeconomy (Opificio Golinelli)

About 60 participants involved

Each session followed a coherent structure:

- Opening plenary with pitches and evaluation grid
- Thematic working tables to identify synergies, gaps, shared resources
- Final plenary with collective synthesis and commitments

3. Final Selection & Presentation

4–7 November 2025 – Presentation of results at the BLU-ER Forum @ ECOMONDO

4. Ongoing Acceleration & Transnational Networking

- Continued follow-up and integration work

Final step: BLUE ECOMATCH in Marseille, connecting the 8 TRAIN LABs at transnational level

Focus Activity:

Co-Designing challenges and priority actions

Results – Achieved Outcomes

Although the full acceleration continues until the Blue Ecomatch, several concrete results have already been achieved:

1. Strengthening of Regional Solutions

- Acceleration and maturation of proposals aligned with the three regional Blue Economy challenges.
- Improved clarity of each project's strategic positioning within the regional ecosystem.

2. Identification of Regional Work Lines

- Shared priority work areas emerging from stakeholder discussions.
- Clear mapping of gaps, resources, and collaboration opportunities.

3. Enhanced Collaboration and Networking

- New connections among companies, research bodies, universities, and public institutions.
- Creation of integration pathways between projects previously unconnected.

4. Support to Innovation Development

- Promotion of innovative ideas and solutions responding to challenges defined by stakeholders themselves.
- Strengthened capacity of the regional ecosystem to co-develop and co-accelerate solutions.

5. Structured, Action-Oriented Outputs

- Collective grids summarizing synergies and thematic nodes.
- Follow-up materials, contacts, and commitments enabling concrete next steps.

Focus Activity:

Co-Designing challenges and priority actions

Learnings:

What worked well

- High-quality **networking** among actors who rarely collaborate.
- **Project maturation**: clearer positioning, strengths, and integration opportunities.
- Activation of **ecosystem dynamics** and alignment with European directions.
- Even without immediate synergies, projects gained **structured reflection** and entered a valuable knowledge base.

What did we learn

- High expertise is valuable but can **broaden discussions** beyond the intended focus.
- Facilitation must balance **technical, strategic, and experiential** contributions.
- Need for **stronger content-tracking tools** to support post-event synthesis.
- Acceleration is not only speed: it is **relationship-building and strategic alignment**.
- The real value is creating a **reusable methodological and relational infrastructure**.

Tips for other peers:

- **Invest in a solid preliminary clustering** of proposals but remain flexible: highly skilled participants naturally broaden discussions.
- Complement facilitation with **structured documentation tools** to ensure traceability and continuity of the work.
- Do not aim for a single “winning project”: value the process as a form of **relational and strategic acceleration** that prepares the ground for future developments.
- Ensure **heterogeneous working groups** but support them with strong methodological guidance to maintain focus.
- Frame the process as part of a **broader strategic pathway**, not as a standalone event: the best results emerge when acceleration is linked to policy, funding tools, and follow-up actions.
- Build a **replicable methodology** that can evolve over time and strengthen the region’s capacity to address future challenges.

For more information:

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Link to the website: [BLUE ECOSYSTEM PROJECT](#)





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