

Waste prevention country profile

Ireland

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European Environment Agency



Country profile: Ireland

General information

Name of the country/ region	Ireland
Geographical coverage of the waste prevention programme (national/ regional)	National
Type of programme (stand alone or integrated into waste management plan or into the circular economy strategy)	Stand-alone programme
Title of programme and link to programme	The Circular Economy Programme 2021 - 2027.
Duration of programme	Ireland's Circular Economy Programme includes the current National Waste Prevention Programme and has a six-year duration up to 2027.
Language	English
Contact person in the country/region	<p>Warren Phelan, Programme Manager w.phelan@epa.ie + 353 1 268 0100</p> <p>Odile Le Bolloch, Scientific Officer o.lebolloch@epa.ie, +353 53 916 0600</p> <p>Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Ireland, Circular Economy Programme, Office of Environmental Sustainability</p> <p>http://www.epa.ie/</p>
Development process of the programme/ revision	<p>Ireland's National Waste Prevention Programme (NWPP) was first established in 2004. Since December 2021 the NWPP is incorporated in the national Circular Economy Programme, led by the Environmental Protection Agency. The Agency has a legal requirement to establish waste prevention programmes, including specific food waste prevention programmes. The Agency has a legal requirement to establish a Circular Economy Programme under the Circular Economy Act 2022¹.</p> <p>The vision of the Circular Economy Programme is '<i>An Ireland where the Circular Economy ensures that everyone uses less resources and prevents waste to achieve sustainable economic growth.</i>'</p>

¹ [pdf \(irishstatutebook.ie\)](http://pdf.irishstatutebook.ie). Reference Section 10.

	The Circular Economy Programme works under four pillars – Delivering through partnerships; Innovation & demonstration; Advocacy, Data, Insights & Coordination and Regulation for Circularity.
Foreseen budget for implementation of the programme	The Circular Economy Programme Annual Report for 2023 provides a budget information/graphic for budget. <u>Circular Economy Programme Annual Report for 2023 Environmental Protection Agency</u>

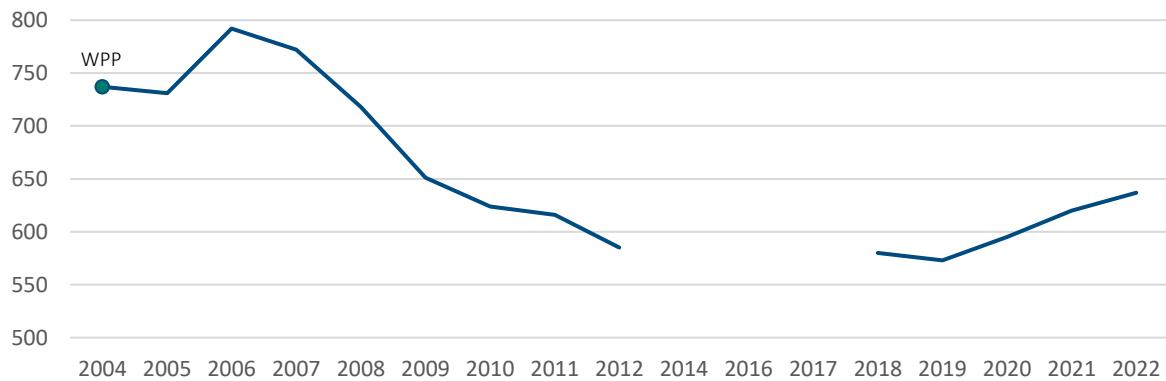
WASTE GENERATION

The following figures illustrate the progress towards waste prevention and decoupling of waste generation from economic growth in Ireland:

Municipal solid waste (MSW):

After a decline between 2010 and 2012, Irish municipal waste generation per capita shows an increase between 2014 and 2020 (Figure 2, left). Waste composition analysis done in 2018 and 2022 indicate that the increase is mainly due to growth in packaging waste (EPA Ireland, 2024). In 2020, Ireland generated 644 kg/cap of municipal waste, which is significantly above the estimated EU-27 average of 520 kg/cap in the same year.

Figure 1 Municipal waste generation in Ireland (kg per capita), 2004-2022



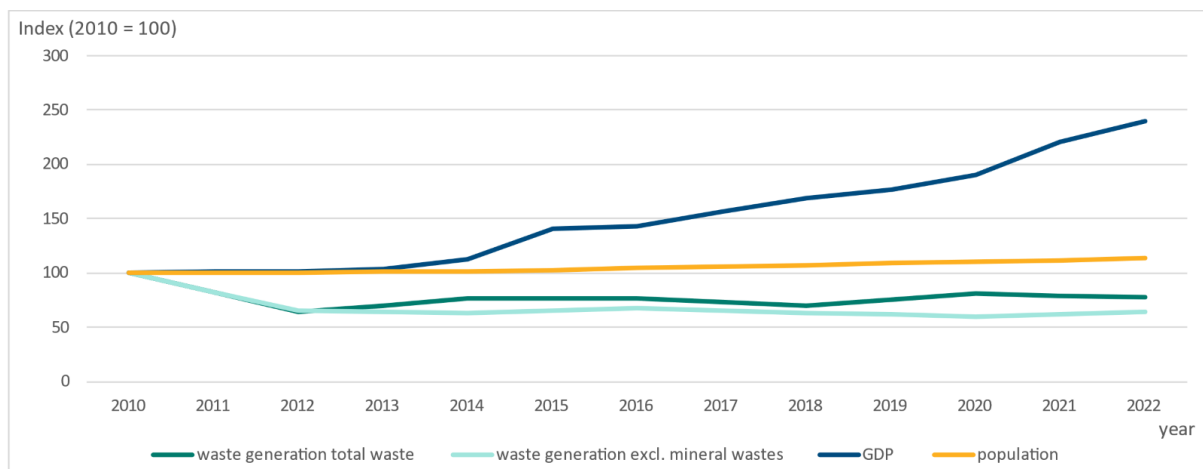
Source: Eurostat (2024d)

Note: There is a break in series in 2020. There is no data available for 2013, 2015, 2021 and 2022. As of reference year 2020, new reporting rules apply for calculating recycled municipal waste pursuant to the targets laid down in Article 11.2(c-e) of Directive 2008/98/EC. Ireland applied the new reporting rules for reference year 2020 and onwards, which led to the break in series in 2020.

Total waste

The total amount of waste generated in Ireland decreased from 2010 to 2012 but then remained rather stable, slightly increasing from 2018 onwards for total waste and stagnating when excluding major mineral wastes (Figure 2). Ireland's GDP significantly grew over the last 10 years, especially since 2013, while waste generation decreased in 2012 and stabilised thereafter, indicating a decoupling of waste generation from economic development. However, the Gross National Income (GNI) might better reflect the actual economic activity in Ireland as it excludes the incomes sent to or received from abroad which are considerable. However, the (corrected) GNI also increased between 2010 and 2022, by 44%, but less than GDP (Central Statistics Office of Ireland, 2024).

Figure 2 Generation of waste (total and excluding major mineral wastes), population and economic development, 2010-2022



Source: Eurostat [ENV_WASGEN, NAMA_10_PC, DEMO_GIND].

Note: Waste generation data for odd years are interpolated.

WASTE PREVENTION PROGRAMME

Objectives and priorities

1. Waste prevention objectives of the Programme - quantitative objectives (waste reduction) - qualitative objectives (reduction of hazardous substances/ environmental impacts)	<p>The National Waste Prevention Programme sits within the Circular Economy Programme 2021-2027. ² This emerging economic model looks to minimise the consumption of resources and energy by keeping products and materials in use for longer. It is founded on the waste hierarchy, which identifies waste prevention as the primary approach; followed by reuse; repair; and recycling.</p>
	<p>The vision for the Circular Economy Programme is: An Ireland where the Circular Economy ensures that everyone uses less resources and prevents waste to achieve sustainable economic growth.</p> <p>More specifically, the NWPP/CEP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce wasteful consumption of material, water and energy resources by changing behaviours in businesses, households and the public sector;• enhance competitiveness and reduce business costs by delivering programmes that stimulate resource efficiency and the circular economy;• support sustainable growth and employment in the green economy - including re-use enterprises;• minimise generation of hazardous wastes through efficient practices and use of safer alternatives;• manage hazardous substances in products through efficient regulation;• inform and influence evidence-based decision-making by compiling and publishing high quality data on waste.
	<p>Since 2020 there have been several significant policy /legislative developments to develop circular economy. This includes, for example, the Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy (2020) and Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy (2021) as well as the Circular Economy Act 2022.</p>
	<p>Local authorities are responsible for waste management planning. The first National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy was published in March 2024.</p>
2. Sectors covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• construction;• manufacturing & industry;• retail;• households;• service activities;• hospitality;• public sector (including procurement).

3. Priority waste types	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Construction & buildings, Food, Plastics, Packaging, Textiles, Electrical and Electronic Products, Batteries & Vehicles
4. Target groups	<p>The CEP explicitly involves working with various stakeholders. Through the four pillars of the CEP (i) innovation & demonstration (ii) delivering through partnerships (iii) regulation for circularity and (iv) advocacy, data, insights, co-ordination the CEP supports initiatives that develop and showcase best practice in an Irish context. Specific interactions are tailored to engage with the general public, commercial enterprises or public bodies, with an emphasis on evidence-driven messaging.</p>

Targets, indicators and monitoring

1.	Indicators used to monitor progress	All specific prevention projects undertaken under the Circular Economy Programme have built-in metrics. Indicators are quantitative where possible and qualitative where appropriate. Examples of such indicators also include the number of businesses or communities engaged by the different waste prevention projects.
2.	Quantitative targets	<p>For the purposes of waste management planning, Ireland is divided into three regions (Southern, Eastern-Midlands and Connacht-Ulster). The first National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024-2030 was published in March 2024, and includes eight targets including a national target for re-use (10 kg per person per year) and a target of 0% total waste growth per person over the life of the Plan . National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy 2024-2030 - My Waste.</p> <p>Other quantitative targets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• national target for a 50% reduction in food waste by 2030, in line with Ireland’s commitment under UN SDG 12.3
3.	Monitoring mechanism of the programme	<p>The Irish Environmental Protection Agency publishes annual progress reports that provide detailed information on successfully implemented waste prevention measures under its Circular Economy Programme 2021-2027 (https://www.epa.ie/pubs/reports/waste/prevention/reports/).</p> <p>The governance for the Circular Economy Programme (which now contains the NWPP) is set out in the programme document EPA Circular Economy 2021 Programme Apr22 Web.pdf</p>
4.	Evaluation of the programme	The annual progress reports include assessments of specific projects and waste prevention measures. Partnership activities are subject to ongoing evaluation to ensure objectives and activities align to strategic objectives of the Circular Economy Programme.

Prevention measures

Implemented prevention measures according to Article 9	<p>The Circular Economy Programme Annual Report 2023 highlights successfully implemented prevention measures in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Innovation and demonstration 2. Delivering through partnerships 3. Advocacy, data, insights & co-ordination 4. Regulation for Circularity <p>Detailed information on specific measures can be found in the following overview (see Table 1).</p>
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The Circular Economy Programme 2021-2027 includes the following measures that are proposed to avoid waste generation (Chapter 1.5):

Table 1: Specific waste prevention measures structured according to Art 9 WFD

Promote and support sustainable consumption models	<p><i>Campus Living Labs</i>: Together with the Irish Universities Association (IUA), the potential of waste prevention and behavioral change on Irish university campuses was explored . Campus Living Labs Irish Universities Association</p> <p>A behavioural insights programme is providing primary qualitative and quantitative research onto behaviours & attitudes & preferences relating to priority materials for circular economy, including food, textiles, packaging, reuse, repair. These insights are providing evidence for policy and data to inform national communication campaigns, for example on food waste prevention, reducing textile consumption and supporting reuse and repair activities. Behavioural Insights Environmental Protection Agency</p> <p>The <i>Roscommon Women’s Network</i> helps visualize the potential of the local circular economy by offering training to upcycle textiles (p. 11).</p> <p>In collaboration with RTÉ, a podcast on the circular economy in Ireland has been produced (p. 26).</p> <p>The annual EPA circular economy conference provides the opportunity for several businesses (commercial/social) to present on their circular business models under the topic ‘Circular Solutions’. These have included businesses focussing on refill, clothing swaps and rental, repair cafes etc. See circular economy section which has recordings of conferences EPA Ireland - YouTube</p>
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<p>Encourage the design, manufacturing and use of products that are resource-efficient, durable (including in terms of life span and absence of planned obsolescence), reparable, re-usable and upgradable.</p>	<p>The EPA’s Producer Responsibility enforcement team inter alia supports Producer Responsibility Initiatives (PRIs) under the WEEE and Batteries Regulations that is placing an increasing emphasis on prevention in the design phase and looking at opportunities to support reuse and repair.</p>
<p>Target products containing critical raw materials to prevent that those materials become waste.</p>	<p>Not specifically addressed in the NWPP.</p>
<p>Encourage the re-use of products and the setting up of systems promoting repair and re-use activities, including in particular for electrical and electronic equipment, textiles and furniture, as well as packaging and construction materials and products.</p>	<p>A National Reuse and Repair Network was established in 2024 and will run to 2026. Its purpose is to facilitate knowledge sharing and engagement to support and scale reuse and repair activities in Ireland. There are about 18 member organisations, from central and local government, State Agencies, social economy sector and representative organisations.</p> <p>National Green Public Procurement criteria for Furniture & Furniture Services were published by the EPA in July 2024. Criteria to support circularity, including reuse, repair and furniture sharing services are included in the criteria set. Other national GPP criteria would have core and comprehensive criteria which support repair and remanufacturing activities (e.g. ICT equipment). Green Public Procurement Environmental Protection Agency</p>
<p>Encourage, as appropriate and without prejudice to intellectual property rights , the availability of spare parts, instruction manuals, technical information, or other instruments, equipment or software enabling the repair and re-use of products without compromising their quality and safety.</p>	<p>A specific tool funded by the CEP is repairmystuff.ie. It is an online repair directory, which creates connections between repair businesses and consumers in Ireland to promote repair within the circular economy approach (p. 13).</p>
<p>Reduce waste generation in processes related to industrial production, extraction of minerals, manufacturing, construction and demolition, taking into account best available techniques.</p>	<p>The <i>Green Enterprise: Innovation for the circular economy</i>’ was a competitive funding programme/ flagship initiative of the CEP that created opportunities for innovations in the priority areas <i>plastic waste, construction and demolition waste, food waste, and resources and materials</i>. Case studies of the completed projects provided insights into circular economy opportunities and scenarios for Irish businesses and organizations as well as demonstration projects to apply research ideas Green Enterprise currently on pause while funding under review. Last call was in 2022 and a number of projects are still underway.</p> <p><i>Resource Efficiency Tools</i>: online tools like TREE help companies watch their internal processes and household actions to make efficient use of water, energy and materials (p. 13).</p>

Irish Manufacturing Research: This three-year partnership (2020-2022) is intended for CIRCULÉIRE, the National Platform for Circularity Manufacturing to develop CE models and offer innovation funding. The goal is to measure performance on GHG emissions and waste generation. The initial 3 year partnership has wrapped up, but the initiative Circuleire is ongoing, now fully funded by Dept of the Environment

The Circular Economy Programme, working with Environmental Licensing, will explore the further integration of the circular economy, waste and resource efficiency within the environmental regulatory framework and EPA licences as a means of promoting circularity in industrial processes, and contribute to a reduction in industrial waste generation. (CEP 2021-2027, p. 13).

Under the Regulation for Circularity pillar, three national criteria have been published to support circularity in construction

1. National end-of-waste criteria for recycled aggregates
2. National by-product criteria for site-won asphalt
3. National by-product criteria for greenfield soil & stone

[End of waste criteria in Ireland | Environmental Protection Agency](#)

[By-products Regulation 27 | Environmental Protection Agency](#)

Best practice guidelines for resource & waste management plans for construction & demolition projects were published by the EPA in 2021. [Best practice guidelines for the preparation of resource & waste management plans for construction & demolition projects | Environmental Protection Agency](#)

These voluntary guidelines are to support circularity in construction, designing out waste from early planning phases, supporting re-use and waste prevention activities throughout the project.

<p>Reduce the generation of food waste in primary production, in processing and manufacturing, in retail and other distribution of food, in restaurants and food services as well as in households as a contribution to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to reduce by 50 % per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and to reduce food losses along production and supply chains by 2030.</p>	<p>The Food Waste Charter, a voluntary agreement, was launched in 2017 and focussed on food waste prevention in the grocery retail sector. A revised Food Waste Charter was launched in June 2023 and food & drink sector businesses across the food supply chain are invited to join. Using a standardised measurement methodology (the Protocol, for manufacturing & processing sector) is central to sign up to the Charter. Sectoral guidance has also been published (bakery, prepared consumer food, seafood, brewing, distillery). The standard measurement methodology for hospitality sector is the Pathway See www.foodwastecharter.ie for resources There are currently approx 70 members of the charter</p>
<p>Encourage food donation and other redistribution for human consumption, prioritising human use over animal feed and the reprocessing into non-food products.</p>	<p>As a national campaign, <i>Stopwoodfaste.ie</i> raises awareness to households on food waste prevention issues.</p> <p>Via the <i>Food Waste Charter</i>, businesses are accelerated to act on prevention and reporting of food waste in Ireland.</p> <p>Through the Food Waste Charter www.foodwastecharter.ie the food use and waste hierarchy is followed, and food donation is encouraged as an activity to prevent food waste.</p>
<p>Promote the reduction of the content of hazardous substances in materials and products, without prejudice to harmonised legal requirements concerning those materials and products laid down at Union level, and ensure that any supplier of an article as defined in point 33 of Article 3 of Regulation (EC) No. 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council provides the information pursuant to article 33(1) of that regulation to the European Chemicals Agency as from 5 January 2021.</p>	<p>One of the roles under the Circular Economy Programme is the implementation of the National Hazardous Waste Management Plan 2021 – 2027 and this includes actions linked to hazardous waste prevention (Resources Environmental Protection Agency (epa.ie))</p>
<p>Reduce the generation of waste, in particular waste that is not suitable for preparing for re-use or recycling.</p>	<p>.</p> <p>The project Rezero by ZeroWaste.ie demonstrates a deposit-return system for food retailers (p. 11).</p>
<p>Identify products that are the main sources of littering, notably in natural and marine environments, and take appropriate measures to prevent and reduce litter from such products, where Member States decide to implement this obligation through market restrictions, they shall ensure that such</p>	<p>Nationally, a deposit return scheme for cans and plastic bottles was introduced in Feb 2024. One of the aims was to divert such waste materials from ending up in litter (as well as increasing the amount separately collected to meet packaging recycling rates and SUP targets)</p>

restrictions are proportionate and non-discriminatory.	
Aim to halt the generation of marine litter as a contribution towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds.	Not specifically addressed in the NWPP.
Develop and support information campaigns to raise awareness about waste prevention and littering.	<i>Local Authority Prevention Network</i> : the LAPN advances the priority efforts of the NWPP in order to prevent local waste and to advance local prevention measures in communities (p. 17).

Additional implemented prevention measures, not covered by Article 9

A single-use plastics project by Polymer Alloy Technology demonstrates the capacity of plastics to be remoulded into pallets in a circular economy (NWPP p. 11)

A Hexafly project demonstrates the conversion of waste to proteins that can be used for animal and aquaculture feed (p. 11).

An Irish Manufacturing Research project called SymbioBeer reduces food waste by using waste bread as a secondary raw material to produce beer, while beer waste is used for the production of bread .

Analysis of waste characteristics and national waste data to inform policy, behavioural change interventions and awareness campaigns with a view of waste prevention in the circular economy (CEP 2021-2027, p. 9).

FOOD WASTE PREVENTION

Food waste generation

There has been a food waste prevention programme with activities under the NWPP since 2009. Stop Food Waste, managed under Circular Economy Programme, is the national food waste prevention campaign for householders and activities to prevent food waste in business/supply chain are also actioned.

A Food Waste Prevention Roadmap 2023 – 2025 was published by the government in Nov 2022 – there are a number of roles for the EPA/circular economy programme within this roadmap. This roadmap is referenced as the [gov.ie - National Food Waste Prevention Roadmap 2023-2025](https://www.gov.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/EPA_FoodWasteCharter_Report_2023_FINAL.pdf) (www.gov.ie)

Measures to prevent food waste

‘Stop Food Waste’ is the national consumer-facing food waste prevention campaign providing guidance and resources to help consumers reduce food waste. Through a combination of education, training, local champions and national promotion (media and social), the programme aims to raise consumer awareness and empower citizens in order to change their behaviour towards food waste reduction.

Through the ‘Food Waste Charter’, the EPA is leading a voluntary agreement initiative that supports businesses throughout the food supply chain in reducing food waste. Businesses pledge to reduce their food waste, measure & monitor their food waste using a standardized methodology, set a target and take action to reduce food waste and report annually on their progress. Report on first year of implementation of the FWC https://www.epa.ie/publications/circular-economy/resources/EPA_FoodWasteCharter_Report_2023_FINAL.pdf

The Food Waste Charter is signed and supported by two government departments (environment and agriculture) and five State Agencies with a remit to develop the food & drink industry in Ireland.

The EPA also hosts the ‘Forum on Food Waste’ that brings together key actors across the food chain to discuss the issues and challenges in relation to food loss and waste in Ireland.

REUSE OF PRODUCTS

Data

According to 2021 data reported to the EEA according to Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2021/19 (EEA, 2024), Ireland re-used:

- 3 771 tonnes of textiles;
- 16 778 tonnes of electrical and electronic devices;
- 15 537 tonnes of furniture;
- 14 729 tonnes of construction material.

It should be noted that this data has been reported for the first time. More information about the interpretation and limitations of the data set are available (EEA, 2024).

Measures to support reuse

The ‘Local Authority Prevention Network’ provides various good practice examples as well as tools and guidelines for the support of reuse and repair of products.

Monaghan County Council manages a national online repair directory which launched in 2018 and has over 1,300 registered repairers. The directory is available on the website: <http://www.repairmystuff.ie/> The CEP provides funding to support this circular economy/waste prevention resource for consumers.

Good practice examples

Green Enterprise is the NWPP’s flagship innovation funding call which supports organisations to develop and demonstrate new circular economy business models and approaches. For the 2021 call the thematic areas were Plastics; Construction & Demolition; Food; and Resources & Raw Materials. A total of EUR 710 000 was granted to support eight projects, which included projects to demonstrate circular economy opportunities for furniture, textiles and related products/material streams, quantification of GHG emissions related to surplus food redistribution and food waste reduction initiatives in commercial kitchens (NWPP Annual Report 2021, p. 13).

Another example is a project completed in 2019, where the Green Enterprise programme provided €55,000 funding for University of Limerick to demonstrate ‘Greening IT’ — a circular economy approach to campus information technology services. The project was the first national campus plan to improve the resource and energy efficiency of IT equipment across each stage of the product life cycle. The outcomes of the project included:

- Demonstrating reduced energy use of campus IT equipment which included optimising cooling and investigating opportunities for reducing up to 90% of campus carbon emissions by moving onsite services to the cloud;
- Including Green Public Procurement criteria in tender documents;
- Encouraging and promoting campus reuse through existing informal reuse exchange systems;
- Engaging suppliers through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes and promoting recycling through student ‘end of semester’ WEEE collection events;
- Upskilling the project team with local training on repairing phones and engaging the campus community on life-cycle impacts and opportunities for extending the use phase of electronic equipment through repair events;
- Hosting a pop-up shop for refurbished IT equipment. Over a two month period, 150 items were sold to staff and students.

A key learning from this study was the importance of gaining support from senior management at the outset to establish cross-departmental motivation and support to undertake the project. Benefits of the

project have continued past completion, such as hosting further repair education events and annual end of semester WEEE recycling events, continuing close engagement with suppliers to enact EPR schemes, increasing the activity and use of existing onsite exchange and reuse systems and using opportunities to reduce campus IT carbon emissions by moving onsite services to the cloud.

Links to circular economy

Waste prevention is an integral part of the comprehensive transformation towards a circular economy. It reduces the input of natural resources into the economy as well as the necessary efforts to collect and recycle waste.

Approaches for improving circularity are often highly interlinked with successful waste prevention. The following table shows which circular strategies are explicitly integrated into Ireland's waste prevention programme.

Topic	Addressed in the programme	Comments
Eco-design	No	N/A
Repair, refurbishment and remanufacture	Yes	Several initiatives that focus on extending the use phase of products.
Recycling	Yes	Several initiatives that support recycling of materials.
Economic incentives and finance	Yes	Detailed and transparent budget for waste prevention efforts. Provision of funding supports.
Circular business models	Yes	Circular businesses present at annual EPA circular economy conference. Innovation & demonstration funding has supported circular business models.
Eco-innovation	Yes	Stimulating innovation is one of the key pillars.
Governance, skills and knowledge	Yes	Governance of the programme is described in the CEP 2021-2027. Many programmes and initiatives focus on increasing skills and knowledge to support behaviour change. Behavioural insights programme provides evidence for awareness programmes and programme direction.