

(DRAFT) CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA



Global Gateway

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Circular by Design: Closing Cycles to Open New Business Opportunities

Circular Design Workshop for Companies

	20-21 October 2026 (Philippines)		8:30 - 16:30 (Manila Time)
	27-28 October 2026 (Thailand)		8:30-16:30 (Bangkok Time)

  Supported by 

Expression of interest link:

<https://forms.cloud.microsoft/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=hhL7ezW3IU0Oo00sSGHXQpweBtjVaatEneLL-PANsIUONEIWTFRMOEhSRIUyRzNWR1g5NEI0OTNLVS4u&route=shorturl>

Background

Southeast Asia has committed to a regional circular economy (CE) transition through the 2021 ASEAN Circular Economy Framework. This is complemented by national CE and Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) action plans, strategies, and roadmaps across the majority of ASEAN Member States, including in Thailand through the Bio, Circular, Green (BCG) Economy framework and in the Philippines through the National Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP). Achieving the CE-transition depends on active leadership from and implementation by businesses to develop and adopt circular products, services, and business processes that are appropriate to markets and local business conditions. Frontrunner companies across the region are already demonstrating tangible benefits, including through savings on materials, energy, water, and disposal costs and access to new markets and to sustainable finance.

The **ASEAN Circular Economy Business Alliance (ACEBA)** is a business-led, ASEAN-centric initiative established to foster business leadership and action on the circular economy.

ACEBA was launched on 22 July 2024 in Jakarta (Indonesia) with the support of the ASEAN Secretariat, the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)s, the ASEAN Business Advisory Council, and the European Union Delegation to ASEAN. ACEBA operates with technical advisory support from the EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component. To date, ACEBA has developed a principles-based circular economy framework for businesses and curated some 100 CE business cases for companies in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. These represent different sectors and business sizes, and provide practical testimony that businesses are benefitting from their circularity initiatives in terms of operational costs savings, new product and market development and/or improved resilience, while doing good for planet and society. Informed by these business cases, European and international best practices and business engagements in the region, ACEBA is developing and piloting practical CE tools to support businesses, including Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The **Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI)** acts as country lead for ACEBA in the Philippines and ACEBA partners with the **Global Compact Network Philippines** in advocacy and capacity building and **Design Centre of Philippines** as knowledge partner. The **Thailand Environment Institute (TEI)** is the ACEBA country lead in Thailand and works closely with the **Thai Business Council for Sustainable Development (TBCSD)** with the **Thai Creativity and Design Centre** as knowledge partner.

Circular by Design

ACEBA approaches CE as a responsible business and innovation strategy with the ambition to bring both the net use of new (*‘virgin’*) materials and resources as well as the net disposal of *‘wasted’* materials and resources as close as possible to zero. This starts with redesigning products, activities and business models, involves using materials more efficiently, longer and repeatedly, and ends with recycling and recovery only those wastes that have not yet been designed out. This can be achieved by adapting CE solutions developed and trialed elsewhere (often considered *‘quick wins’*) and/or pivoting into circular solutions that are unique to the company, building on company’s specific strengths and addressing its most material CE opportunities and risks (hence potential *‘game changers’* for the company).

CE materializes through circular products, services, business processes and supportive business models, putting the spotlight on systematic design as enabler for ambitious CE adoption. At its core, circular design involves good product, service and process design, undertaken with a circularity lens. This is promoted through a three-step approach:

- **Initiate** – spotlight circular opportunities by comparing current products, services, activities and competencies with CE ambition benchmarks;
- **Ideate** – generate alternative circularity concepts using circular solution templates and strategies; and

- **Implement** – explore synergies among product, service, business activities and business model to develop maximum value from the circularity concepts for the business, environment and society.

Design Workshop

ACEBA is organizing a two-day “Circular by Design” workshop for company teams interested to familiarize with circular design and to get a head start on conceptualizing and developing appropriate company specific circular solutions. Following a concise introduction and familiarization with CE ambitions and solutions, the workshop is chiefly dedicated to an introduction and dry run of the circular design approach to a product, service and/or business activity of each of the participating company teams.

In preparation of the design workshop participating company teams are encouraged to provide a company brief ([see EoI](#)) and identify a potential circular design challenge to be elaborated during the workshop. The workshop is expected to result in specific circular concept(s) for each company. Post workshop individual de-briefings will be undertaken with each company team to discuss follow up steps.

The design workshop is curated and delivered in partnership with lead design institutions, particularly the Design Center of the Philippines and the Thailand Creativity and Design Centre. This will also facilitate follow up support to company teams and foster institutionalization of circular design knowledge and practice in these countries.

Objectives

1. Provide a design-focused introduction and overview of CE, and the opportunities and risks CE is creating for business, illustrated with wide range of business examples from Southeast Asia and beyond;
2. Introduce and practice the step-wise approach of Initiate – Ideate – Implement to generate and develop practical circularity solution concepts; and
3. Scope company specific circularity solution concepts along with potential implementation strategies for each participating company.

Target Group

The design workshop targets Philippine and Thai company teams (minimum of two participants) to enable effective scoping and development of potential circularity solutions. The approach is best fit for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) with some product or business development experience, yet also beneficial to business unit teams of larger entities. ACEBA is specifically focusing on textile and garment, leather and footwear, agri-food, furniture and homeware, automotive, electronics and electric equipment, building and construction and hospitality sectors. However, interested companies from other sectors are welcome to participate.

Provisional Agenda (subject to change)

Time	Session
Day 1	
08:30 – 09:00	Registration and networking
09:00 – 09:30	Introduction and stage setting • Introduction by national hosts • EU SWITCH Asia Policy Support Component • ASEAN Circular Economy Business Alliance • Participants introductions – Tour de Table
09:30 – 10:30	Circular Economy and Design: introduction • CE concepts and practices • CE design: products/services, business activities and business models
10:30 – 10:45	Morning break
10:45 – 11:45	Circular Means Business • Doing business in a circularising world • Business value creation – circular solution canvas • Group exercise on analysis of circular business cases
11:45 – 12:15	Circular by Design: overview • Introduction, key element and approach to Initiate – Ideate – Implement • Circular design examples
12:15 – 13:15	Lunch break
13:15 – 14:45	Deep Dive: Initiate • Getting started with circular design ambitions • Participants' work on participant's company's circularity challenge • Participants' sharing of initiation insights
14:45 – 15:00	Afternoon break
15:00 – 16:15	Deep Dive: Ideate (part 1 divergence) • Driving creativity with circularity templates • Participants' work on participant's company's circularity challenge/continued • Participants' sharing of ideation insights
16:15 -16:30	Wrap up • Synthesis and reflections on day 1 • Outlook on day 2
Day 2	
08:30 – 09:00	Registration and networking
09:00 – 10:30	Deep Dive: Ideate (part 2 convergence) • Reflection on Initiate and Ideate (divergence) • From ideas to circularity concepts • Participants' work on participant's company's circularity challenge/continued • Participants' sharing of ideation insights/continued
10:30 – 10:45	Morning break

10:45 – 12:15	Deep Dive: Implement • Using solution canvas to develop business value • Participants' work on participant's company's circularity challenge/continued • Participants' sharing of implementation insights/continued
12:15 – 13:15	Lunch break
13:15 – 15:00	Presenting circularity solutions for action • Introduction • Participants' work on action plan for company's circularity challenge • Participants' sharing on action plans • Reflections
15:00 – 15:15	Afternoon break
15:15 – 16:15	External reflection session (with participation of EU and country institutions) • Moderators' introduction • Company reflections • Moderators' reflections • Discussion with EU and country institutions
16:15 – 16:30	Workshop closure • Remarks on behalf of EU SWITCH Asia • Remarks from moderators • Next steps
16:30	Networking and bilateral discussions

About the moderators

Jett Pisate Virangakapura

Jett is a design educator and social innovation consultant. He currently serves as a faculty member at the School of Global Studies, Thammasat University, where he has established the Circular Design Lab and teaches design thinking for sustainability. He has also taught at Mahidol University, King Mongkut University of Technology and co-taught the Design Across Borders course offered by Stanford University.

In addition to his academic career, Jett has wide practical experience in working on design projects. He has worked across the apparel, electronic, furniture, media, toy and tourism sectors. He has played the role of a Design Thinking Facilitator and Circular Design Coach for both private and public sector organisations. His private sector clients include DTAC, MQDC, Siam Motors and PepsiCo. His public sector clients include NESDC, OPDC, OCSC, DES, and UNDP.

Dr. Rene Van Berkel

Dr. Rene Van Berkel is a renowned international thought leader in circular economy, resource efficiency, climate innovation and responsible business. Throughout his career he balanced roles as senior academic and international development practitioner and advised businesses, mostly MSMEs, to improve productivity, drive environmental performance and achieve innovation.

He is the co-convener of ACEBA, a business-led alliance focused on advancing the circular economy transition in Southeast Asia., and senior circularity expert for the SWITCH Asia Policy Support Component. He is also member of the International Resource Panel – the leading global science to policy platform on sustainable use of material resources.

Dr. Van Berkel has held leadership roles with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization - UNIDO - in India, Indonesia and at UNIDO Headquarters in Austria. Previously he held professorial position at Curtin University of Technology, Australia, and several academic positions at the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, where he also obtained his doctorate in Environmental Science.