



Connact

Annual Meeting

THE ITALIAN SYSTEM AND THE PRIORITIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

BRUSSELS, 4 FEBRUARY 2026

**CIRCULAR INNOVATION:
INITIATIVES, TOOLS
AND TECHNOLOGIES
IN THE EUROPEAN AND
NATIONAL CONTEXT**

prepared by



ITALIAN NATIONAL AGENCY FOR
NEW TECHNOLOGIES, ENERGY AND
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The roundtable addresses the strategic role of the circular economy as a lever of competitiveness, resilience, and industrial autonomy in the European and national contexts, with a focus on policies, tools and technologies for the sustainable management of raw materials, including critical raw materials (MPC).

Italy leading in Europe

Italy remains one of Europe's leading countries in terms of overall circularity, ranking second among the 27 Member States and first among the major European economies, with a 20% improvement in resource productivity compared to 2019. However, there remains a high dependence on imports of materials, reaching 48% of total national needs in 2023, compared to an EU average of 22%, with the value of imports rising from €424 billion in 2019 to €568.7 billion in 2024 (+34%). Among the top five European economies, Italy is also the country most exposed to the incidence of critical raw materials on industrial production in relation to GDP (31%).

The Critical Raw Materials Act and the new European framework

This scenario is the backdrop for the new European framework outlined by the Critical Raw Materials Act (EU Regulation 2024/1252), which identifies 34 critical and 17 strategic raw materials and sets targets for 2030 for extraction, processing and recycling, strengthening the role of circularity throughout the entire value chain. At the national level, the National Strategy for the Circular Economy, the National Waste Management Programme, the National Technical Table on Critical Raw Materials, and the recent legislative provisions of 2024 outline a framework of interventions oriented towards the development of circular industrial supply chains, urban mining, eco-design and advanced recovery of secondary raw materials.

The discussion also focuses on the contribution of ecodesign—reinforced by the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (EU 2024/1781)—and biotechnology as enablers for reducing environmental impacts, closing production cycles and creating new economic and employment opportunities. Looking ahead, the roundtable offers a space for discussion on the challenges and operational needs related to the implementation of the future Circular Economy Act, with particular reference to multi-level governance, policy coherence, and stakeholder engagement.