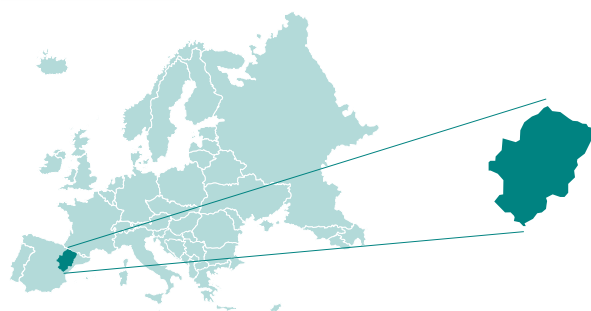


# Aragón Circular, Spain

*From linear to circular economy – an initiative of the regional government transforming business models, institutions and training*



## Autonomous Community of Aragón, Spain



1.326.261 inhabitants



47.720 km<sup>2</sup> area



appr. 28 per km<sup>2</sup> population density

## Characteristics of the region

- Located in northeastern Spain and bordering France, the region consists of the provinces Huesca, Teruel, and Zaragoza.
- It ranks as the fourth largest Spanish autonomous community by area, with its capital city Zaragoza hosting more than half of the total population.
- Main sectors: Automotive industry, Agriculture, Logistics, ICT

## Baseline situation and objectives

In January 2020, the “Aragón Circular” initiative was introduced through an institutional declaration involving the Government of Aragón, Social Agents, and prominent companies in the Circular Economy sector in the region.

The “Aragón Circular” Strategy is characterized by its cross-sectoral nature, aiming to encompass a wide range of economic activities and value chains, such as agri-food, chemical, textile, construction, and energy efficiency. It was designed without a specific sector in mind but with the goal of being applicable to various industries.

Aragon had a small increase in population over the last 20 years. However, the population is projected to decrease slightly in the future and become older on average. The Government of

Aragon prioritizes combating depopulation, especially in rural regions, as a key policy area. To address this, they emphasize the importance of maintaining circular activities near agri-food operations or rural areas. This approach helps shaping the region’s infrastructure and strengthens the population’s presence in these areas.

## Focus of the initiative

“Aragón Circular” is built upon 10 strategic commitments that outline a novel socioeconomic model. These commitments encompass goals such as minimizing environmental effects, encouraging eco-friendly design, decreasing greenhouse gas emissions, fostering research and innovation, providing training, creating a comprehensive strategy to combat depopulation, enhancing business operations through efficiency and sustainability across production and consumption, and integrating educational content across various levels of schooling.

In addition, the autonomous region implements four measures:

- Financial support
- Training
- Seal
- Communication, networking, knowledge transfer



Sustainable irrigation in agriculture © Parichart Thongmee / Vecteezy

## Stakeholders involved

The “Aragón Circular” declaration was openly endorsed by several parties during a January 2020 event, where the strategy was presented to the public. Among the actors who have signed it are:

- Relevant companies out of the private sector in Aragón
- University of Zaragoza
- Aragónes Federation of Municipalities
- Counties and Provinces of Aragón
- Civil society, through the participation of the social agents
- Representatives of business and trade union groups

All the political forces present in the Regional Parliament of Aragón also unanimously endorsed it.

## Financing

Currently, the Government of Aragón has been funding the initiative using its own resources. However, there are plans to secure financing from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), pending approval from the European Commission.

## ★ Spotlight

### Aragón Circular Seal

The “Aragón Circular Seal” has been introduced to publicly acknowledge companies and local administrations for embracing the circular economy model and implementing effective practices to enhance circularity. This recognition signifies exceptional, innovative, and sustainable management, meeting specified criteria and legal obligations. The seal has two categories: Companies and Local Entities. The first call for applications saw 101 submissions from 17 economic sectors within the Autonomous Community.



### Expert Course in Circular Economy

Another key dimension of the Aragon Circular initiative is the institution of specific training programs. The “Expert Course in Circular Economy” is conducted in Teruel by the School of Industrial Organisation (EOI). The second implementation of this course will start on September 2nd 2023 and currently counts 25 enrolled students. The Government of Aragon provides substantial funding for this course, covering 80% of the costs.



## 🔭 Outlook

The Aragón Circular Strategy will continue to be promoted to generate a transversal culture in all economic sectors of the region to fight against depopulation and encourage the sustainable development of the territory. This will include activities as:

- Introducing innovative production initiatives to enable local closure of material, energy, and service cycles,
- The SODIAR Circular Economy Financing Fund is established to support small and medium-sized businesses and self-employed persons,
- Collaboration between companies and research and technology centers to promote Circular Economy innovation projects in Aragón,
- The Government of Aragon participates in the European RESOURCE project, which seeks to encourage European-level private funding for regional companies pursuing Circular Economy projects,
- Implementation of a conference centered around start-ups, sustainability, and the circular economy,
- A public procurement bill is under development for public administration and local entities. This bill proposes preferential treatment, on the part of contracting authorities, when considering companies holding the “Aragon Circular” seal for public procurement tenders.

## Key learnings and replicability

- Support and commitment of social agents from civil society is necessary to implement circular activities.
- Dissemination and promotion through conferences and seminars.
- Joint participation of all stakeholders since the beginning to implement a shared vision.
- Maintaining close proximity to companies is crucial, involving attentive and personalized support at a senior level promptly upon their request. The aim is to provide genuine and substantial assistance whenever possible.
- Support of all political parties for the idea of circularity is crucial for an efficient and successful implementation of activities in the framework of Circular Economy.
- Considering the region's economic traits when setting plans and executing projects, ensuring a strong alignment with local conditions.

### Contact person of the initiative

Miguel Luis Lapeña Cregenzán, Director of Planning and Economic Development  
E-mail: mllapenna@aragon.es

## Challenges and barriers

Collaboration between companies holds potential for improvement. While the Government of Aragon predominantly supports collaborative efforts between companies and research centers, there is a need to further encourage cooperation directly among companies. Limited awareness and knowledge on available recycled or recyclable materials in the region might be a barrier to tap synergistic potentials.

---

***“The circular economy requires a change in the cultural, productive and consumption model, and therefore, the achievement of this objective is only possible through the collaboration, participation, involvement and commitment of the entire Aragonese society: public administrations, companies, agents social, consumers and citizens in general.”***

Aragon Declaration for a Circular Economy

## Imprint

### *Editor*

Federal Ministry for Housing, Urban Development and Building

August 2023

### *Scientific support*

Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development

### *Contracting authority*

Prognos AG, Institut für Ländliche Strukturforchung e. V.

### *Print*

Druckerei Arnold, 14979 Großbeeren

### *Layout*

ecosense – media & communication

### *Photo credit*

Cover photo: Agricultural landscape in Spain © Pixabay