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THE SOPHIA PROJECT

NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the Second Edition of the SOPHIA Newsletter

We are pleased to introduce the second edition of the SOPHIA newsletter, keeping stakeholders and partners informed on the progress of this Horizon Europe project.

SOPHIA - Implementation of Advanced Digital Solutions to Increase the Circularity of PV Panels - brings together 15 partners across eight countries, representing the full photovoltaic value chain: research, production, recycling, policy, and market development. The project focuses on advancing PV panel circularity through innovative assessment, repair, recycling, eco-design, and digital traceability solutions.

In this edition, you will find updates on project milestones, event activities, and policy alignment efforts, highlighting how SOPHIA contributes to a more sustainable and resilient European solar industry.

Project Updates

The SOPHIA project's Deliverable D1.1, submitted November 27, analyses the full PV supply chain from raw material extraction to panel deployment, including technical processes, global market dynamics (with emphasis on Europe and China's roles), and recommendations to enhance project outcomes. It will be publicly available post-European Commission approval.

planned for March.

The SOPHIA consortium will meet for its 12-month General Assembly at Fraunhofer's facilities in Halle (Saale), Germany, on May 6-7, 2026, marking the project's one-year milestone; all partners are expected to attend this gathering to review progress and plan next steps.

📅 Events

SOPHIA was represented at the International Electronics Recycling and Reuse Conference in Valencia (**IERC 2026**) by partners Recycling Europe, AIMPLAS, and Recyclia. The project's presentation showcased our objectives and mission to industry experts and stakeholders, reinforcing our position in the electronics sustainability community.



SOPHIA will be presented at two key conferences in June 2026: **the E-Waste Expo in Frankfurt** and the **European Recycling Conference in Madrid** hosted by Recycling Europe. These events offer excellent opportunities to disseminate project results and engage with the wider circular economy community.

The Policy Landscape

SOPHIA operates within the broader EU policy ecosystem that is accelerating the transition to a circular photovoltaic sector. Recent developments create a powerful enabling environment for recycling innovation and domestic material recovery.

RESourceEU: Mobilizing €3 Billion for Material Autonomy

In December 2025, the European Commission officially adopted the **RESourceEU Action Plan**, a massive financial and strategic "engine" designed to back the Critical Raw Materials Act. Over the next 12 months, the EU will mobilize **€3 billion** through various instruments (including the Battery Booster and the Innovation Fund) to de-risk projects in three high-priority areas: permanent magnets, batteries, and defense-critical materials. This move signals a transition from setting legislative targets to providing the actual capital needed to build domestic extraction and advanced recycling plants.

WEEE Confirmation: The Shift from Directive to Regulation

The European Commission has confirmed that the **revision of the WEEE framework** will be integrated into the **2026 Circular Economy Act** with a critical upgrade: moving from a "Directive" to a "Regulation." This is a major win for industry, as it will replace the current patchwork of 27 different national reporting systems and collection rules with a single, directly applicable EU law. The focus of this new Regulation will include mandatory harmonized treatment standards and stricter enforcement on e-commerce marketplaces to ensure a level playing field for EU-based manufacturers.

Solar & CRM: The "Strategic Project" Surge / Horizon Europe 2026-2027 Work Programme

January 2026 saw the closing of the second call for **CRMA Strategic Projects**, with a record-breaking focus on the solar and magnet value chains. With photovoltaic waste expected to soar to **2.2 million tonnes by 2050**, the Commission is fast-tracking permits (capping the process at 27 months) for specialized solar panel recycling and silicon recovery facilities. These projects are now being tied into the new **Horizon Europe 2026–2027 Work Programme**, which has earmarked over **€500 million** for circularity initiatives including "urban mining" technologies that can extract high-purity silver and silicon from end-of-life solar modules.

Communications

You can follow us for updates, news, and events there and on [X](#)!

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Our mailing address is:

This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation program under grant agreement N°101182162. This newsletter reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

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