

# WEEE Ireland: White Goods Repair Skillset for a Circular Economy

- Extending the lifespan of an appliance requires eco-design, the availability of spare parts and the availability of repair skills – the latter is currently lacking in Ireland.
- The *Skillset for a Circular Economy Project* will increase the amount and skills of field service (repair) technicians being trained on a year-by-year basis and improve capacity for transformation of the Irish White Goods' repair sector, providing a career pathway in this important waste prevention activity.

## Background

WEEE Ireland is a not-for-profit Compliance Scheme owned by its Members' – who number more than 1200 Producers of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) and batteries. The Scheme has operated under Ministerial approval since 2005 and is currently in its third approval programme 2017-2022. The Scheme works with collection partners and core indigenous recycling facilities in Ireland as well as specialist downstream processors and supports mandated EN WEEE standard through quality recycling to properly manage hazardous waste and recover resources. We estimate over 300 people in Ireland are directly employed in activities relating to the operation of contracts for the WEEE Ireland Scheme.

## Extending the life of White Goods

If eco-design and availability of spare parts are critical to ensure the lifespan of an appliance can be extended, the availability of repair skills is another central component which is currently lacking in Ireland. Indeed, both consumers and OEMs highlighted the difficulty to find trained and authorised repair technicians across the country and the absence of appropriate training programmes to grow the current repair workforce and increase the lifespan of the white goods placed on the Irish market. Drawing from these observations, WEEE Ireland decided to lead on a White Goods Repair Skillset project and apply for funding as a founding member of the CIRCULÉIRE Platform.

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- Ireland's first circular economy innovation network.

### Skillset for a Circular Economy Project

The Skillset project is run in partnership with FIT, an industry-led training initiative and registered social enterprise not for profit organisation ([FIT.ie](https://www.fit.ie)), and the [White Goods Association, an IBEC coordinated industry association](#) which represents most of the major manufacturers and distributors of white goods products in Ireland.

The aim of the Skillset project is to help develop an industry-accredited and standard-based repair training programme – to train young people or those looking to retrain later in their careers, to repair white goods that would otherwise end up as electrical waste.

### Impact

Development of this program will focus attention on repair and reuse, at the top of the waste hierarchy. The curriculum will also include content related to sustainability and circularity. The kitchen appliances used to train students in practical diagnostic and repair skills have been provided by WGA members to a new training centre established in Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath.

The programme will increase the amount and skills of field service (repair) technicians being trained on a year-by-year basis and improve capacity for transformation of the Irish repair sector, providing a career pathway in this important waste prevention activity. The longer-term objective from the WGA is for the training programme to gain accreditation on the QQI framework of qualifications and continue under the auspices of FIT and national ETBs (Education and Training Boards).

This project is still in early stage, but the first pilot training course will begin during the summer of 2021. A technical committee provides practical advice and guidance to the project and is drawn from the after-sales service managers from many of Ireland's leading kitchen appliance OEM brands and their distributors.

### Conclusion

This case study showcases the importance of cross supply-chain cooperation to benefit from funding opportunities available. This project could not have been developed without funding and knowledge resources from CIRCULÉIRE and ongoing collaboration between the WGA, FIT and WEEE Ireland.

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