III Międzynarodowa Konferencja Naukowa
Instytutu Zarządzania UEP
ZRÓWNOWAŻONE ZARZĄDZANIE ORGANIZACJĄ
3rd International Scientific Conference
of the PUEB Institute of Management
SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT
Zrównoważone Zarządzanie Organizacją
Instytut Zarządzania
UNIWERSYTET EKONOMICZNY W POZNANIU
SAMSUNG
21–22 października / October 2026

Circular practices in Polish SMEs

Magdalena Muradin
Institute of Management, Poznań University of Economics and Business, magdalena.muradin@ue.poznan.pl

Introduction and research aim

The circular economy seeks to reduce waste and keep products and materials in use. Everyday practices in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) offer a starting point for understanding this transition.

This exploratory MINIATURA 9 study examines how Polish SMEs understand circularity and which practices they already use. It compares sectors to identify opportunities for further adoption.

Research questions
How do SMEs understand the circular economy?
Which circular practices occur in everyday operations?
How do these practices differ across sectors?

MINIATURA 9 *Funding: National Science Centre, Poland, MINIATURA 9.*

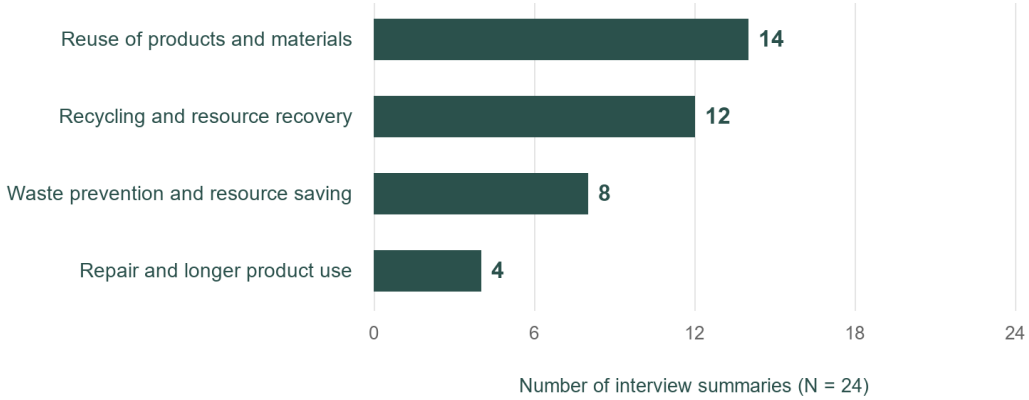
Research methods





Preliminary results and discussion

How do SMEs understand the circular economy



Everyday practices
SMEs report material savings, reuse, repairs and cooperation with resource recipients, often without a formal circular strategy. Energy and water savings improve environmental efficiency but do not necessarily close material loops.

Sector differences
Furniture firms reuse offcuts and repair components. Clothing firms use fabric remnants and surplus stocks, alter garments and limit overproduction. Electrical firms recover metals, service equipment and sometimes reuse components. Hotels prevent food waste, use refillable dispensers and repair furnishings. Some hotels follow formal procedures, while furniture firms commonly rely on owners' routines.

Conclusions

The interviews provide three main answers.

- First, respondents understand circularity mainly through practical resource management, with varying awareness of its wider scope.
- Second, enterprises report reuse, repair and waste prevention within everyday operations, including cases without a separate formal strategy.
- Third, sector activities shape the practices adopted: material remnants matter particularly in furniture and clothing, equipment maintenance in electrical activities, and food and consumables in hotels.

These findings suggest that further development can build on existing practices and cooperation with resource recipients. Support should reflect sector conditions and distinguish established activities from plans or occasional solutions. The findings describe self-reported experiences from 24 purposively selected interviews and cannot establish prevalence across Polish SMEs.

References

Muradin, M. (2026). MINIATURA 9 research report and interview materials. Unpublished.

Kirchherr, J. et al. (2023). Conceptualizing the Circular Economy (Revisited): An Analysis of 221 Definitions. Resources, Conservation and Recycling, 194, 107001.

MINIATURA 9
Funding: National Science Centre, Poland, MINIATURA 9.