EU battery recycling projects call for stronger political action to secure Europe's critical raw materials

BRUSSELS, 2 June 2026 - Europe now has many of the technologies needed to improve battery recycling, but stronger political coordination and industrial deployment are required to scale them, according to experts gathered at the joint final conference of the EU-funded FREE4LIB and RESPECT projects.

The conference comes as Europe seeks to reduce its dependence on imported critical raw materials and implement new battery sustainability requirements under the EU Battery Regulation. The transition towards climate neutrality and sustainable mobility is accelerating demand for batteries across Europe. As the deployment of electric vehicles and energy storage systems increases, ensuring the sustainable management of end-of-life batteries has become a strategic priority for Europe. The recycling and recovery of critical raw materials are essential to reducing dependency on imports, strengthening resource security, and supporting the objectives of the European Green Deal and the EU Battery Regulation.

"Closing the loop of the battery recycling process"

Against this backdrop, the FREE4LIB and RESPECT projects have worked to develop innovative technologies and approaches that contribute to a more sustainable, circular and resilient battery ecosystem. Juan Castro, FREE4LIB's coordinator, opened the conference stating that "*our project's goal is in a nutshell to close the loop of the battery recycling process.*" Through research and demonstration activities, both projects have sought to improve battery recycling processes, enhance material recovery, and support the development of a competitive European battery value chain.

Final conference showcases project results and policy developments

The final conference attracted more than 100 registered participants, demonstrating strong interest from stakeholders representing research organisations, industry, public authorities, and EU-funded initiatives active in the battery sector.

The event provided an opportunity to present the key achievements and results of the FREE4LIB and RESPECT projects while fostering discussions on the future of battery recycling in Europe. Sessions explored technological innovations, circular economy approaches, and the evolving policy framework shaping the European battery ecosystem.

Particular attention was given to recent developments related to battery recycling, circularity, critical raw materials, and the competitiveness of Europe's battery value chain. The discussions highlighted both the progress achieved and the challenges that remain in scaling sustainable battery recycling solutions across Europe.

High-level policy contributions reinforce the strategic importance of battery recycling

The conference featured contributions from representatives of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV), as well as a Member of the European Parliament, MEP Ivars Ijabs. To feed the discussion, FREE4LIB released its policy recommendations, which draw from the project's research, to lay out ways to develop a more cohesive and coherent approach to the lithium batteries design, recovery and recycling, and use of secondary raw materials.

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A platform for collaboration across the European battery ecosystem

Beyond presenting project outcomes, the conference served as a platform for dialogue between researchers, industrial actors, policymakers and representatives from other European projects and initiatives.

The exchanges facilitated knowledge sharing and explored opportunities for future collaboration, helping to build connections across the battery recycling value chain and support the continued development of innovative solutions.

As Europe prepares for a sharp increase in end-of-life batteries over the coming decade, stakeholders at the conference agreed that accelerating recycling innovation and deployment will be essential to securing critical raw materials, reducing environmental impacts, and strengthening Europe's industrial competitiveness.

FREE4LIB is funded by the European Union and brings together partners from across Europe to accelerate innovation in battery recycling, resource recovery and circular value chains.

To learn more about the FREE4LIB project, visit our website,
or contact Martin Devaulx de Chambord (martin.devaulx@alienor.eu)

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