LIFE GRAPhiREC

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NEWSLETTER

LIFE GRAPHIREC



From industrial scale to circular graphite: GRAPhiREC partners visit VARTA Consumer Batteries in Dischingen

Welcome to the June 2026 issue of the GRAPhiREC Newsletter!

Welcome to the June 2026 issue of the LIFE GRAPhiREC newsletter. This edition focuses on the recent Technical Working Group meeting hosted by VARTA Consumer Batteries in Dischingen, Germany, and the accompanying visit to the model shop and alkaline battery production plant.

The visit offered partners a valuable opportunity to connect project discussions with the real industrial context in which battery materials are processed, tested and used. It also highlighted why graphite matters: it is not only a critical raw material for future technologies, but also part of everyday battery products used in homes, workplaces and industries across Europe.

In this issue, we look at what the visit showed about battery production at scale, why graphite circularity is increasingly relevant for Europe, and how GRAPhiREC is progressing towards its objective of recovering graphite from lithium-ion and alkaline battery waste for reuse in new battery value chains.

NEWSLETTER - LIFE GRAPHIREC

GRAPhiREC partners meet at VARTA Consumer Batteries

On 6 May 2026, LIFE GRAPhiREC partners met for the project's eighth Technical Working Group meeting, hosted by VARTA Consumer Batteries at its alkaline plant in Dischingen, Germany, with several partners also joining online.

The meeting provided an opportunity to review the updated project timeline, discuss progress across the technical work packages, and align next steps following the recently approved project amendment. Partners exchanged updates on pilot plant development, input material preparation, graphite purification, characterisation activities, battery testing plans, exploitation work and communication activities.



LIFE GRAPhiREC partners met at the VARTA Consumer Batteries site in Dischingen for the project's eighth Technical Working Group meeting.

The discussion confirmed the importance of close coordination between all parts of the project value chain. GRAPhiREC brings together recycling companies, research partners, graphite expertise, battery manufacturers and communication and exploitation support. This integrated approach is essential to ensure that recovered graphite is not only technically processed, but also validated, documented and prepared for potential industrial uptake.

The next project phase will continue to focus on material preparation, testing and validation, while also strengthening communication and dissemination of publicly shareable progress.

Seeing battery production at an industrial scale

The Technical Working Group meeting was followed by a visit to the VARTA Consumer Batteries model shop and alkaline battery production plant.

VARTA's Dischingen site is the company's alkaline plant and packaging site. According to VARTA, the Dischingen site has a production capacity of around 1.75 billion alkaline batteries per year.

During the visit, partners heard that production at the site is in the range of around five million batteries per day, corresponding to roughly four tonnes of graphite used in daily production.

This figure gives a strong sense of scale. Graphite is often discussed in the context of future technologies, electric mobility and critical raw materials policy. However, the Dischingen visit showed very clearly that graphite is also part of everyday industrial production and everyday products.

VARTA's consumer battery portfolio includes alkaline batteries in common household sizes such as AAA, AA, C, D and 9V, used in devices ranging from torches and toys to household equipment and other portable applications.

For GRAPhiREC, this industrial context is highly relevant. The project is working to demonstrate how graphite recovered from battery waste can be treated, validated and potentially brought back into new battery value chains. The visit therefore connected the project's technical work with a clear practical question: how can Europe make better use of the graphite already present in battery-related material streams?





Everyday batteries rely on carefully managed material flows, including graphite-containing components.

Why graphite circularity matters for Europe

The VARTA AG Group visit took place at a time when Europe is placing increasing emphasis on resilient, circular and competitive raw material value chains.

Under the Critical Raw Materials Act, the EU has set 2030 benchmarks for domestic capacities along the strategic raw materials value chain, including at least 25% of annual EU consumption to come from recycling and no more than 65% of annual EU consumption of each strategic raw material to depend on a single third country.

Battery policy is also moving in the same direction. The EU Batteries Regulation entered into force in August 2023, and in July 2025 the European Commission published new rules for calculating and verifying recycling efficiency and material recovery from waste batteries. These rules are intended to support high-quality recycling and recovery, particularly for critical and strategic raw materials, and to provide more consistent calculation methods for recyclers across the EU.





Against this policy background, graphite recycling is becoming increasingly relevant. Europe's battery value chains will need dependable, well-characterised and specification-ready secondary materials if circularity is to become part of industrial practice rather than only a policy objective.

This is where LIFE GRAPhiREC contributes. The project focuses on recovering graphite from lithium-ion and alkaline battery waste, with the aim of supporting future reuse in new battery applications. Its work combines technical development, characterisation, battery validation, exploitation planning and stakeholder engagement.

Project progress and next steps

During the Technical Working Group meeting, partners reviewed progress across the main project activities and discussed the updated planning for the next phase.

The project continues to advance work on the two recycling routes addressed by GRAPhiREC: one focused on lithium-ion battery-related material streams and the other on alkaline battery material streams. Partners are working on material preparation, purification, characterisation, coating and performance assessment, as well as future battery testing activities.

The meeting also confirmed the importance of keeping project data, material flows and sample information well organised across partners. As the project moves further into testing and validation activities, clear documentation will support comparability, transparency and future exploitation work.

On the SIMA side, the environmental authorisation integration request linked to the planned pilot activities was published on the Abruzzo Region website on 5 May 2026, with the administrative review period now underway. This represents another step in preparing the alkaline-battery graphite recovery route within LIFE GRAPhiREC.

The next months will focus on continuing technical work, preparing for upcoming testing steps, strengthening partner-level communication, and ensuring that publicly shareable progress is communicated clearly to stakeholders.



The Technical Working Group meeting allowed partners to align on the next steps across the project value chain.

From project work to public awareness

One of the key communication aims of LIFE GRAPhiREC is to make the importance of graphite recycling understandable to industrial stakeholders, policymakers and the wider public.

The visit to the VARTA Consumer plant in Dischingen provided a strong story for this purpose. It showed that graphite is not an abstract material. It is used at significant scale in products that people handle every day, while at the same time being highly relevant to Europe's future battery value chains.

Stronger visibility helps the project reach the audiences that matter: industrial actors, research organisations, policymakers, related EU-funded projects and stakeholders working on battery recycling, critical raw materials and circular value chains.



GRAPhiREC connects technical development with Europe's wider need for resilient and circular battery material value chains.

Stay connected!

Follow LIFE GRAPhiREC on LinkedIn to stay up to date on project progress, technical developments, events and future results.

The project will continue sharing updates on graphite recovery, battery recycling, pilot activities, partner engagement and the role of recycled graphite in Europe's battery value chains.

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