



# EUROLAB Special Briefing

## The EU Action Plan for a Circular Economy

On 2nd December the European Commission adopted a comprehensive “circular economy package” to boost competitiveness, create jobs and generate sustainable growth, focusing on waste reduction, recycling and repairing broken products.

Preserving the value of products, materials and resources in the economy as long as possible while reducing the generation of waste to a minimum supports the EU’s aim of creating a sustainable, resource-efficient and thus competitive economy. With this long-term strategy, the authorities in Brussels hope for a sustainable competitive advantage for the European economy.

The proposals cover the full lifecycle: from production and consumption to waste management and the market for secondary raw materials. This transition will be supported financially by ESIF funding, €650 million from Horizon 2020 (the EU funding programme for research and innovation), €5.5 billion from structural funds for waste management, and investments in the circular economy at national level.

### Impact on the internal market legislation

More important than the waste disposal is its prevention and products will have to be designed accordingly. The Commission has the objective that during the development of a product more emphasis will be put on making products last longer and easier to repair, upgrade and recycle. Electrical and electronic products are particularly significant in this context.

The current market signals are obviously not strong enough to bring the interests of producers, users and recyclers in accordance. The Commission therefore considers that it is essential to create incentives for an improved product design, which are internal market compliant but which do not hamper competition and innovation.

### Ecodesign

The appropriate instrument for achieving this has quickly been identified – Ecodesign. So far, ecodesign requirements aimed mainly at the energy efficiency of products. In future, the Commission will also consider the aspects repairability, durability, upgradability, recyclability or the identification of certain materials or substances under the umbrella of these rules, depending on the products. Already announced are mandatory product design and labelling requirements, which are proposed to apply for flat screens and -TV.

### Revival of EMAS and the EU Eco-label?

The Commission also wants to revitalize EMAS (EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme) and the EU Eco-label. With the latter, consumers should get reliable and comprehensive information on the environmental impact of products and potential practices of planned obsolescence will be counteracted. With regard to the latter apparently the critical voices were heard on the part of consumer protection.

## Key Actions adopted or to be carried out under the current Commission's mandate include

- Funding of over €650 million under Horizon 2020 and €5.5 billion under the structural funds;
- Actions to reduce food waste including a common measurement methodology, improved date marking, and tools to meet the global Sustainable Development Goal to halve food waste by 2030;
- Development of quality standards for secondary raw materials to increase the confidence of operators in the single market;
- Measures in the Ecodesign working plan for 2015-2017 to promote reparability, durability and recyclability of products, in addition to energy efficiency;
- A revised Regulation on fertilisers, to facilitate the recognition of organic and waste-based fertilisers in the single market and support the role of bio-nutrients;
- A strategy on plastics in the circular economy, addressing issues of recyclability, biodegradability, the presence of hazardous substances in plastics, and the Sustainable Development Goals target for significantly reducing marine litter;
- A series of actions on water reuse including a legislative proposal on minimum requirements for the reuse of wastewater.

This package will be closely monitored by EUROLAB as it will likely provide business opportunities for our members.

## Links:

- European Commission Communication: [http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/circular-economy/docs/communication-action-plan-for-circular-economy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/circular-economy/docs/communication-action-plan-for-circular-economy_en.pdf)
- Annex to the Commission Communication: [http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/circular-economy/docs/annex-communication-action-plan-for-circular-economy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/priorities/jobs-growth-investment/circular-economy/docs/annex-communication-action-plan-for-circular-economy_en.pdf)
- Press release: [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-15-6203\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-6203_en.htm)

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