

TOWARDS A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

KEY INITIATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR 2017

In 2017 the [European Commission](#) continues to implement its [Circular Economy Action Plan](#). This Plan includes a [strategy for plastics](#) in the circular economy, an assessment of options for the improved interface between chemicals, products and waste legislation, a legislative proposal on [water reuse](#) and a monitoring framework on circular economy.



The UE website underlines that plastic waste has a significant impact on the environment. Every day, a gigantic amount of plastic leaks into the environment, the seas and oceans (5 to 13 million t/year). It stays there for a very long time, damaging nature and the ecosystems that support life on Earth. Producing less waste will benefit both the environment and the economy, creating new business opportunities and durable new jobs. In a circular economy, we rethink the whole approach – from how we produce and consume to the way we manage waste, turning it back into raw materials ready to be used again.

To achieve these goals, in 2014 the European Commission has adopted an ambitious new Circular Economy Package to help European businesses and consumers to make the transition to a stronger and more circular economy where resources are used in a more sustainable way. The [EU Action Plan for the Circular Economy](#) establishes measures covering the whole cycle: from production and consumption to waste management and the market for secondary raw materials. The [annex to the action plan](#) sets out the timeline when the actions will be completed.

The proposed actions will contribute to "closing the loop" of product lifecycles through greater recycling and re-use, and bring benefits for both the environment and the economy. The plans will extract the maximum value and use from all raw materials, products and waste, fostering energy savings and reducing Green House Gas emissions.

The legislative proposals on waste set clear targets for reduction of waste and establish a long-term path for waste management and recycling. Key elements include:

- A common EU target for recycling 65% of municipal waste and 75% of packaging waste by 2030;
- A binding landfill target to reduce landfill to maximum of 10% of municipal waste by 2030;

[Achieving the transition to a more circular economy](#) will require tightening the bond between waste reduction and resource efficiency, learning to appreciate waste as a resource, and applying the lessons of the natural world, where nothing is wasted. Above all, it will mean getting away from the current approach where we dig limited raw materials out of the ground, use them once to make a product, and then dispose of them by burying them back underground. The fundamental switch will involve moving away from our 'take, make, consume and dispose' economies to a model based on 're-use, repair, refurbishing and recycling'.



- A ban on landfilling of separately collected waste and promotion of economic instruments to discourage landfilling ;
- Simplified and improved definitions and harmonized calculation methods for recycling rates;
- Measures to promote re-use and stimulate industrial symbiosis turning one industry's by-product into another industry's raw material;
- Economic incentives for producers to put greener products on the market and support recovery and recycling schemes (eg for packaging, batteries, electric and electronic equipments, vehicles).

The European Commission has also created two *Circular Economy* tools to check and improve the performances of the actors involved: the [EU Ecolabel Scheme](#) and the [Eco-Management and Audit Scheme EMAS](#). The EU Ecolabel is a voluntary label promoting environmental excellence by serving as a reference for consumers. EMAS is a voluntary management scheme for companies and organizations to improve environmental performance. It spans economic and service sectors and is applicable worldwide.

The official website underlines that Circular economy offers an opportunity to reinvent the economy, making it more sustainable and competitive and bringing benefits for European businesses, industries and citizens. Common standards and support for the use of more secondary raw materials will create a safe and sustainable supply of raw materials to the industry. This helps create new jobs, supports innovation and boosts competitiveness. Improved waste management rules will reduce landfill and tipping fees. Smarter use of resources is not only good for business, but will also help protect the environment, preserve essential resources for current and future generations, and create synergies for industries which most depend on it, such as tourism, agriculture and food manufacturing.

The European Commission financially support this transition towards a Circular Economy by the European Structural & Investment Funds and investments in the circular economy at national level.

In particular, the European Commission considers research and innovation as essential elements for the success of the circular economy and a strategic support for the Action Plan will be provided under the [Horizon 2020 - EU funding program for research and innovation](#).

To know more

[Circular Economy in European Union](#)

[EU action Plan for circular economy](#)

[2015 Report on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan](#)

[EU strategy for circular economy](#)



[UE Circular Economy in Facebook](#)

[Towards a circular economy](#)

[Ecolabel](#)

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[Horizon 2020 Calls](#)