Transition to a circular economy – EU policy framework and role of regional cooperation

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Patrick Wegerdt
European Commission - DG Environment
Regional and bilateral environmental cooperation Unit
What is at stake?

- Multiple crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution - all driven by unsustainable use of resources; energy crisis, cost-of-living crisis
- Global population set to increase to 10 billion by 2050
- Only one planet Earth, yet by 2050, we will be consuming as if there were three
- Global consumption of materials such as biomass, fossil fuels, metals and minerals is expected to double in the next forty years
- Annual waste generation is projected to increase by 70% by 2050
We are encountering three major interrelated ecological crises...

Biodiversity loss
Climate change
Pollution

... and our **unsustainable use of resources** is a key driver for all of them.

... and the EU is responding with interrelated solutions!

- Biodiversity Strategy
- Circular Economy
- Zero Pollution Ambition
- Climate Action
The von der Leyen Commission

Priorities of the Commission 2019 - 2024

“I will propose a European Green Deal in my first 100 days in office”

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

1. A European Green Deal
2. An economy that works for people
3. A Europe fit for the digital age
4. Protecting our European way of life
5. A stronger Europe in the world
6. A new push for European democracy
The European Green Deal

- CLIMATE PACT AND CLIMATE LAW
- INVESTING IN MORE SUSTAINABLE, SMARTER MOBILITY
- PROMOTING CLEAN ENERGY
- STRIVING FOR GREENER INDUSTRY
- ELIMINATING POLLUTION
- PROTECTING NATURE
- FROM FARM TO FORK
- LEADING THE GREEN CHANGE GLOBALLY
- ENSURING A JUST TRANSITION FOR ALL
- MAKING HOMES ENERGY EFFICIENT
- FINANCING GREEN PROJECTS
European Green Deal: environmental pillars

**CIRCULAR ECONOMY**
- Plastics
- Textiles
- Constructions
- Chemicals
- Waste
- Batteries
- ...

**BIODIVERSITY**
- Agriculture
- Forests
- Soil
- Nitrates
- Protected areas
- Pollinators
- ...

**ZERO POLLUTION**
- Water (marine & fresh)
- Air
- Mercury
- Industrial emissions
- Noise
- ...

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EU Flag
Circular Economy: need for action

- From 1970 to 2017, the annual global extraction of materials tripled and it continues to grow.
  
  Source: The International Resource Panel, Global Resources Outlook, 2019

- More than 90% of biodiversity loss and water stress come from resource extraction and processing.
  
  Source: The International Resource Panel, Global Resources Outlook, 2019

- About 50% of total greenhouse gas emissions come from resource extraction and processing.
  
  Source: The International Resource Panel, Global Resources Outlook, 2019

- Annual waste generation will increase by 70% by 2050.
  
  Source: World Bank, What a Waste 2.0, 2018

- Only 12% of the materials used by EU industry come from recycling.
  
  Source: Eurostat, 2016 figures

- There is only one planet Earth, yet by 2050, the world will be consuming as if there were three
Changing the way Europe consumes and produces

Sustainable Product Policy Framework

Key Value Chains

Less Waste More Value

- Electronics and ICT
- Batteries and vehicles
- Packaging
- Plastics
- Textiles
- Construction and buildings
- Food, water and nutrients

- Make sustainable products the norm in the EU
- Empower consumers and public buyers
- Sustainable production processes

Sections of CEAP II:
- Making circular economy work for people, regions and cities
- Circular economy as a requisite for climate neutrality
- Getting the Economics Right
- Financial Markets
- Investments and R&I
- Global Level Playing Field
- Monitoring

• Reduce Waste
• Reduce Waste Exports
• Boost market for high quality and safe secondary raw materials
• Export • Boost market for high quality and safe secondary raw materials

Getting the Economics Right

Financial Markets

Investments and R&I

Global Level Playing Field

Monitoring

European Commission
An agenda to promote CE at bilateral, regional and multilateral level, including through development & international cooperation programmes.

**Towards a global circular economy**

**Leading efforts at global level to:**

- Keep resource use within planetary boundaries
- Decouple global economic growth from resource use
- Promote jobs creation within and outside the EU

**Kick-start negotiations for a Global agreement on plastics**

At UNEA 5.2, March 2022, resolution adopted to fight pollution by forging an internationally binding agreement by 2024

**Global Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency Alliance**

Launched 02/2021 UNEA 5.1

**CE in free trade agreements**

**Outreach activities – i.a. Circular Economy Missions**

**Initiate discussions for a global agreement on natural resource management**

+ ‘Safe operating space’ for natural resource use

**‘Leading the way to a global circular economy: state of play and outlook’**

Ongoing
Making sustainable products the norm in the EU

Impact of current ecodesign and energy labelling legislation

€ 120 billion saved in energy expenditure for consumers in 2021 alone

Wider range of requirements and products covered:
• product durability, reusability, upgradability and reparability
• presence of substances that inhibit circularity
• energy and resource efficiency
• recycled content
• remanufacturing and recycling
• carbon and environmental footprints
• information requirements, including a Digital Product Passport
EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles

1% of material used to produce clothing is recycled into new clothing (globally)

Key actions:

1. New design requirements for textiles under the **Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation**
2. Stopping the destruction of unsold or returned textiles
3. Action to address the unintentional release of **microplastics** from synthetic textiles
4. Clearer information on textiles and a **Digital Product Passport**
5. Tackle **greenwashing**
6. Propose mandatory **Extended Producer Responsibility** for textiles with eco-modulation of fees

About 5.8 million tonnes of textiles are discarded every year, equivalent to 11.3 kg per person (EU)

Almost 9/10 Europeans (88%) think that clothing should be made to last longer

Textiles production doubled between 2000 and 2015 (globally)
Directive on single-use plastics and fishing gear

Different measures for each item taking into account:
- consumer behaviour/needs
- opportunities for businesses

Adopted by EP: March 2019
Council’s vote: April 2019

10 most common plastic objects found on European beaches

- Drink bottles
- Bags
- Crisp packets/sweet wrappers
- Sanitary applications
- Single-use plastic items represent 50% of marine litter

Additional items:
- Cigarette butts
- Food containers
- Balloons and balloon sticks
- Food containers
- Cups & lids
- Cutlery, straws & stirrers
- Cotton buds
Aim - reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment

- items with available sustainable alternatives
  - promote less harmful alternatives: market bans
- items with no clear alternatives
  - prevention measures: design requirements, consumption reduction, consumer information
  - better waste management: separate collection, extended producer responsibility + clean-up
In conclusion:

- Crucial to integrate environment and climate issues into all policy areas – whole-of-government approach

- EU recognises need for ambitious but achievable targets to stimulate action at regional and global level

- The issues are transboundary and impact on broader issues, such as trade and access to markets, therefore require cooperation between countries to achieve the objectives