

## **CIRCULAR ECONOMY Greens/EFA Briefing**

On Tuesday 14 March, MEPs will debate and vote on a series of reports to revise legislation related to waste and packaging, under the banner of “the Circular Economy”. The Greens/EFA group has focussed on concrete preventative action: binding reduction targets for food waste and marine litter; improved collection of waste materials; stronger recycling targets; and an end to incineration of recyclable or compostable waste. Taken together, these measures can help the EU meet climate commitments and boost the economy.

Today’s vote is a first legislative reading, so if it is accepted by the Parliament, triologue negotiations will commence.

### ***What is the Circular Economy?***

In today's economy, materials are extracted, products manufactured, used, and thrown away, at as low a cost as possible. This cycle is not only polluting, it is unsustainable on a planet with limited resources. The Circular Economy is an effort to change this. In a circular economy, products stay in use for longer and at the end of their life, they are reused, repaired, re-manufactured, upgraded, or recycled.

### ***What are the benefits?***

**Jobs and the economy:** Recent estimates suggest that the circular economy could boost the European economy by as much as €1.8 trillion by 2030. It also has the potential to unlock enormous job creation. It is estimated for every 10,000 tons of waste, one job can be created if that waste is incinerated, 6 jobs if it is landfilled, 36 if it is recycled, and up to 296 if it is reused.

**Environmental:** There are also clear environmental benefits: reducing the damaging extraction of raw materials; improving air quality by reducing incineration; and preventing toxic residues leaking into the soil through landfill waste sites.

### ***What are some specific examples of the Circular Economy in practice?***

**Cutting food waste:** Reducing overproduction means less waste, less pollution, greater regard for animal welfare, and better quality food. It can also help combat hunger in Europe and the world. We want EU wide binding targets to reduce food waste by 30% by 2025 and 50% before 2030.

**Making sure products are fixable, re-usable, and last longer.** Combating planned obsolescence means saving money (no need to buy a new one), less pollution, and the creation of local jobs and business opportunities here in Europe. We want to empower citizens through making manuals, technical information and spare parts available. Also, by ensuring waste is collected and sorted properly, we can create resilient local jobs and give wind for creation of the “secondary raw material market”.

### ***What is on the table today?***

The proposals originated under the former Environment Commissioner Potočník, who managed to get a proposal adopted by the Commission in 2014 at the end of his mandate. However, the incoming Commission withdrew the proposal in November 2014, and it was only reinstated following loud protest from stakeholders, the Council and the European Parliament. The new

proposal lacked much of the ambition of the previous one but it has been greatly improved by the Environment Committee.

The Commission proposes to revise three pieces of legislation in substance (the waste framework directive, the packaging and packaging waste directive, and the landfill directive) and to bring three other pieces of legislation in line in terms of comitology and reporting requirements (on batteries, end of life vehicles, waste electrical and electronic equipment).

Key modifications in the **waste framework directive** include:

- obligation for member states to reduce food waste and marine litter;
- compulsory separate collection of bio-waste, with qualifier “where technically, environmentally and economically practicable”;
- increase of recycling targets for municipal waste (60% by 2025, 65% by 2030; currently 50% by 2020);
- minimum requirements for extended producer responsibility schemes.

Key modifications in the **packaging and packaging waste directive** include:

- increase of recycling targets for packaging waste (65% by 2025, 75% by 2030; currently 55% by 2008);
- increase of specific recycling targets for specific materials (plastic, wood, ferrous metals, aluminium, glass, paper and cardboard) for 2025 and 2030.

Key modifications in the **landfill directive** include:

- maximum 10% landfill for municipal waste in 2030, with possibility for Estonia, Greece, Croatia, Latvia, Malta, Romania and Slovakia to have a five-year extension, provided they meet 20% in 2030;
- no landfilling of biodegradable waste that has been separately collected (currently: reduction to 35% by 2015).

### ***What are the key issues for plenary?***

**Will Parliament maintain the improved ambition?** Will MEPs insist on maintaining the higher ambition level (5% more recycling and 5% less landfilling of municipal waste) as proposed by the former Commission, or accept the lower level proposed by the new Commission? ENVI clearly voted for a higher ambition level, but we expect the EPP will try and roll back on this in the plenary vote.

**Will MEPs get serious about reducing food waste?** ENVI asked for clear measures from Member States on prevention of food waste, including an aspirational target of cutting by 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030. Will MEPs take the next step and call for a binding food waste reduction target to be set up by 2020?

**Will Member States be allowed to ban types of packaging?** Member States are allowed to adopt national restrictions on plastic bags. Will they also gain the right to do so for all types of packaging?