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## FEATURED

February 2015

# Circular Economy Package Withdrawal

It goes without saying that at the beginning of 2015 the discussion on European policy in our area (i.e. waste policy but also a more general circular economy policy, including sustainable development, energy-climate, and resource efficiency) has been dominated by the new Work Programme of the European Commission. This Programme, in turn, shows a simplification strategy, or even a withdrawal of certain items. For instance, on 16 December 2014, the European Commission officially put it forward to withdraw its proposal to amend several waste directives ([COM/2014/0397](#)) formulated in July 2014 in the framework of the “Circular Economy Package”. According to the Commission, this decision is justified by the need for a “new and more ambitious proposal”.

However, the orientation of the future Commission proposals remains strongly uncertain. Moreover, numerous reactions against this backtracking have been noted (cf. [“Withdrawal of the Circular Economy Package”](#) below).

In reality, the principal amendments introduced by the July 2014 document consisted in increasing the obligatory recycling targets for municipal waste and packaging waste, a harmonisation of calculation methods for recycling rates and early control of compliance with the objectives, as well as an eventual ban of landfill for all recoverable waste.

In our opinion, these objectives were already rather ambitious, even if they lacked specific objectives for waste prevention (apart from food waste) or for preparing for reuse.

In any case, the Commission was legally bound to transmit to the Council and the Parliament a report on waste prevention by the end of 2014 (Article 9 of the Framework Directive); the same applies to the municipal waste recycling targets (Article 11(4) of the Framework Directive), packaging waste recycling targets (Article 6(5) of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive), and the objectives for phasing out landfilling for recyclable waste (Article 5(2) of the Landfill Directive).

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS ISSUE:

Latvian Presidency Programme

EC 2015 Work Programme

Waste Directives at the EP

Consultation on Marine Environment

EESC Supports Circular Economy

Climate Economy Report Available

Horizon2020 Call Still Open

Funding Opportunities



## COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

### Programme of the Latvian Presidency

The focus is on three overarching priorities: Competitive Europe, Digital Europe and Engaged Europe.

The Programme covers:

- the post-2015 sustainable development agenda
- the setting up a European Fund for Strategic Investment
- the revision of the Multi-Annual Financial Framework
- the preparations for a 2015 agreement on a climate change regime
- the review of the Europe 2020 Strategy

- a coherent governance model regarding the 2030 Framework for Climate and Energy Policy
- a more sustainable agriculture
- the improvement of the operation of the carbon market

Concerning the resource efficiency and green growth agenda, the Presidency “will organise a debate of the Environment Ministers in March on the further integration of environment aspects in the European Semester process and in the Europe 2020 Strategy, in particular with regard to resource efficiency.”



### Launch of the European Year for Development

On 9 January 2015, the European Year for Development was officially launched in Riga with the support of all the European Institutions.



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION

### EC Work Programme for 2015

The headline plans for 2015 include:

- An Investment Plan for Europe (€315 bn)
- A Digital Single Market Package
- An Action Plan to combat tax evasion and tax fraud
- A holistic approach to migration
- Deeper Economic and Monetary Union
- A European Energy Union

In relation with this last orientation, the Programme covers: taking action to ensure energy supply security,

integration of national energy markets, reducing energy demand in Europe, and promoting green technology.

On 13 January 2015, the Commission adopted the legislative proposal for the European Fund for Strategic Investments, which will be established in close partnership with the European Investment Bank (EIB). The proposal sets up a European Investment Advisory Hub to help with project identification, preparation and development across the Union. A European Investment Project Pipeline will improve investors' knowledge of existing and future projects.



## Withdrawal of the Circular Economy Package

First of all, it must be recalled that in July 2014 the Commission proposed a number of measures for circular economy (COM 2014/0398), including:

- A. An action plan conducive to circular economy, including:
  - Eco-conception and innovation (a revision of the Eco-design Directive, which would include resource efficiency criteria; a better integration of all research and innovation projects in the scope of the Horizon2020 programme, etc.).
  - Unblocking of investment (recommendation for green public procurement, innovative financial instruments for accounting rules, fiduciary duties, “resources stress tests”, the bonds market, etc.).
  - Harnessing action by business and consumers (through the Environmental Footprint of Products initiative or the commitments in the framework of the Raw Materials European Innovation Partnership).

B. A modernisation of the waste policy, including:

- Ambitious recycling targets.
  - A simplification of reporting obligations and establishing of an early warning system ensuring that Member States meet targets on time.
  - Specific measures for certain flows (30% less marine litter by 2030; recycled construction materials; reduction of food waste by 30% by 2025; registries for phosphorus).
- C. Setting a resource efficiency target, at 30% to be debated upon by the Council.

The legislative component of this strategy was withdrawn by the Commission on 16 December 2014, with the indication that more ambitious proposals would be formulated by the end of 2015.

This decision has been upheld in spite of the opposition of various stakeholders.



## Consultation on revision of ETS post-2020

The European Commission has launched a consultation on the revision of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) for the period 2021-2030.



## Conference on the Raw Material Commitments

The High Level Conference of the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on Raw Materials was held on 13 January 2015 in Brussels, followed by a Brokerage event on the Raw Materials relevant topics of Horizon 2020 on 14 January 2015.



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## Waste directives revision is still on the agenda

The European Parliament spoke against the “backtracking of the Commission” through a letter from the Chair of the Environment Committee on 8 December 2014.

A public hearing concerning the waste directives revision was held on 22 January 2015.



## Biofuel Reform

The Finnish MEP leading work on the EU biofuel reform, Nils Torvalds, has called for a tighter limit on the use of food-based fuels (6% of the EU’s 10% target for renewable energy in transport) than that advocated by Member States (7%).

Mr. Torvalds is also pushing for a more favourable regime for advanced biofuels before and after 2020, particularly those using wood as a feedstock. He proposes to delete a reference in the Council of Member States’ version of the proposal on the need to take account of the “cascading principle” – prioritising wood for uses other than energy production.

## Clarification of the Climate Governance

Green MEP Claude Turmes accused the UK of proposing to shut the European Parliament out of energy governance completely.

In an informal position co-authored with the Czech Republic, the UK proposes a “light touch” approach from Brussels with a focus on the EU’s “collective progress” rather than national implementation.



## OK for GMO National Bans

New legislation to allow EU Member States to restrict or ban the cultivation of crops containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on their own territory, even if this is allowed at EU level, was passed by MEPs on 12 January 2015.

The new rules would allow Member States to ban GMOs on environmental policy grounds other than the risks to health and the environment already assessed by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

Member States could also ban GMO crops on other grounds, such as town and country planning requirements, socio-economic impact, avoiding the unintended presence of GMOs in other products and farm policy objectives. Bans could also include groups of GMOs designated by crop or trait.



# EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

## New Climate Economy Report

On 22 January 2014, the World Resources Institute organised, in partnership with the European Economic & Social Committee's Sustainable Development Observatory, a public briefing on the recent "Better Growth, Better Climate: The New Climate Economy Report" of the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate.



## Consultation on Marine Environment

On 14 January 2015, a stakeholder consultation on "Protecting the marine environment" was organised at the Committee of the Regions by Rapporteur Mr Hermann Kuhn.



## Strong Support for the Circular Economy (Planning)

On 10 December 2014, the European Economic and Social Committee adopted an opinion in favour of a European circular economy "with active participation from the world of work, governments, employers and employees, consumers and legislative and regulatory authorities at various levels."

The opinion further states that "the EU should also encourage all Member States to turn their waste plans into territorial circular economy plans focusing on measures to promote material resource savings and safeguard human well-being".

For the EESC, "legislative steps on phasing out the landfilling of recyclable waste, in the long term, and increasing recycling targets are preconditions for the shift towards a circular economy. They do not create additional administrative burdens for businesses, but provide the right frame for investment into circular economy solutions." (8 January 2015)





## EUROPEAN FUNDING

### Don't miss the upcoming deadlines!

☑ **HORIZON2020 CALL open till 21 April!**

- Raw Material Partnership;
- Eco-innovative Solutions for (urban) waste recycling or reuse;
- Sustainable use of agricultural waste;
- Reuse and remanufacturing technologies;
- Recovery technologies for metals;
- Reducing the carbon footprint of European Cities;
- Integrated approach to food security, low carbon energy, sustainable water management and climate change mitigation.

**VIEW INFORMATION**



☑ **EUROPE FOR CITIZEN CALL open till 2 March!**

Don't miss the calls for "networks of towns" and "towns twinning" from EACEA.

**VIEW INFORMATION**



☑ **ERASMUS+ CALL open till 30 April!**

"Strategic partnership in the field of education" (max. 150.000 euros/year for training).

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☑ **CREATIVE EUROPE CALL open till 25 February!**

"Creative Europe/Support to European Platforms" (DG Education-Culture).

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*The ACR+ Team hopes you have enjoyed reading the first issue of our online EU newsletter. We strive to constantly improve our Member Services and would very much appreciate your comments. Do not hesitate to let us know what we can do to **make the EU Digest more interesting for you** and your organisation!*

**Contact us at [info@acrplus.org](mailto:info@acrplus.org). We will be very happy to hear from you!**