

Towards a Circular Future: Strengthening Policies and Cooperation for Sustainable Consumption and Production in the EU

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Paris, France (22/04/2023)

Recognising That:

- The EU is facing significant environmental challenges due to overconsumption and overproduction, which has led to the depletion of natural resources, environmental degradation, and climate change.¹
- The lifetime of retail products and constructions is limited, and the waste generated from discarded products is increasing, with over 2.2 billion tonnes of waste generated in the EU each year.² The construction sector accounted for 37.5% of all waste produced in the EU in 2020.³
- The urgent need to accelerate the transition towards a circular economy in Europe and globally, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.^{4 5}
- The circular economy has the potential to create economic opportunities, reduce environmental impacts, and enhance resource efficiency by promoting the reuse, repair, renovation and recycling of products and materials, and by reducing waste and pollution.⁶
- Cross-border cooperation is crucial for implementing circular economy policies effectively, as waste and products often cross borders, and cooperation can help to harmonize standards, exchange best practices, and facilitate the transition to a circular economy.^{7 8}

Acknowledging That:

¹ European Parliament (2016). *A Longer Lifetime for Products: Benefits for Consumers and Companies*. IP/A/IMCO/2015-11

² Eurostat. (2023). *Environmental Data Centre on Waste: Total waste generation by NACE Rev. 2 economic activity (env_wasgen)*. Retrieved March 27, 2023, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ENV_WASGEN_custom_3663160/bookmark/table?lang=en&bookmarkId=aff27ae-8dd3-4c62-abc5-b8e779a60f50

³ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Waste_statistics#Total_waste_generation

⁴ Schroeder, P., Anggraeni, K. and Weber, U. (2019). *The Relevance of Circular Economy Practices to the Sustainable Development Goals*. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 23: 77-95.

⁵ Preston, F., Lehne, J. and Wellesley, L. (2019). *An Inclusive Circular Economy Priorities for Developing Countries*. Chatham House. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2019-05-22-Circular%20Economy.pdf>

⁶ KPMG Economics (2020). *Potential economic pay-off of a circular economy*.

<https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/au/pdf/2020/potential-economic-pay-off-circular-economy-australia-2020.pdf>

⁷ European Commission (2020). *Circular Economy Action Plan*. https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf

⁸ Benelux (2023). *Jaarplan 2023: Grensverleggend samenwerken*. <https://www.benelux.int/nl/publication/jaarplan-2023-2/>

- In 2021, the circular material use rate among EU member states varied widely, ranging from 1.4% / (In Romania) to 33.8% (in The Netherlands), while the average circular material use rate across the EU was 11.7%.⁹
- The EU acknowledges the importance of circular renovation measures in achieving waste reduction and climate neutrality goals such as the delay of building demolition, maximizing the reuse of building products and maximizing the use of renovation materials with high recycled content.¹⁰
- The EU has taken steps towards a circular economy through the EU Circular Economy Action Plan and the Sustainable Products Initiative, which aim to promote a circular economy by setting targets and standards for resource efficiency, waste reduction, and product sustainability.¹¹
- The EU needs to further enhance circularity policies and cross-border cooperation to address the challenges of overconsumption and waste generation, as the circular economy is still in its infancy and requires further investment and policy support.
- YEPP adopted the resolution “Towards a comprehensive European Mining Strategy” in February 2023, calling on the EU and member states to reduce their exposure to supply chain vulnerabilities for critical raw materials. Re-use and circular use of critical raw materials can reduce strategic dependence on autocratic regimes with low regard to western values like democracy and human rights.¹²
- The circular economy offers a promising alternative that seeks to decouple economic growth from resource consumption and waste generation, by promoting reuse, repair, refurbishment, renovation.¹³ and recycling of materials and products, while creating economic, social, and environmental benefits.

YEPP Calls on:

- The EU to propose an ambitious policy package in order to increase the EU-average circular material use rate to at least 40% / 30% in 2030, requiring enhanced efforts to promote circularity in all member states, in particular supporting first the EU countries with a lower rate to realign with the current European average (11,7%). Moreover, to set ambition binding

⁹ Eurostat. (2023). *Circular material use rate (env_ac_cur)*. Retrieved March 29, 2023, from https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/product/view/ENV_AC_CUR

¹⁰ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/building-renovation-where-circular-economy>

¹¹ European Commission (2022) 142: *Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL establishing a framework for setting ecodesign requirements for sustainable products and repealing Directive 2009/125/EC*

¹² Youth of the European People's Party. (2023). *Towards a comprehensive European Mining Strategy*. <https://youthpep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Towards-a-comprehensive-European-Mining-Strategy.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/building-renovation-where-circular-economy>

targets to reduce domestic material consumption use by 2030 and bring EU consumption within planetary boundaries by 2050 .¹⁴

- The EU and its member states to promote enhancing the lifetime of products by promoting sustainable design and encouraging repair, reuse, and recycling of products. This could include introducing design guidelines for durability reparability and reusability¹⁵, establishing repair and reuse networks, and promoting consumer education and awareness of circular products and services.
- The EU to further promote the EU ecolabel , to encourage sustainable design, repair, reuse and recycling of products.
- The EU to acknowledge and reduce overconsumption by promoting sustainable consumption patterns, including through education and awareness-raising campaigns, labelling schemes for sustainable products, and pricing mechanisms that internalise environmental costs.
- The EU to further promote extended producer responsibility schemes, eco-design requirements, and circular procurement practices, which incentivise the design of sustainable products, reduce waste and pollution, and promote circular business models.
- The EU institutions and Member States to prioritize green circular procurement by promoting minimum mandatory green criteria or targets for public procurement to prioritize the purchase of products made from recycled or renewable materials to incentivize private sector actors. This could help to create demand for recycled materials and promote the development of circular supply chains. ¹⁶
- The EU to leverage the circular economy to decrease dependence on autocratic regimes by promoting resource efficiency, reducing waste and pollution, and promoting the sustainable use and recycling of materials. In particular for resources that are strategically important and/or dual-use materials, such as chemicals, nuclear isotopes, and critical raw materials.
- The EU to strengthen cross-border cooperation among member states and with other countries and regions to ensure the effective implementation of circular economy policies and the reduction of waste generation. This could include harmonising waste management standards, facilitating the exchange of best practices, and promoting circular supply chains and trade.

¹⁴ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/ims/circular-material-use-rate-in-europe>

¹⁵ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877705815021402>

¹⁶ <https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2022/number/3/article/green-public-procurement-a-neglected-tool-in-the-european-green-deal-toolbox.html>