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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ENVIRONMENT, TERRITORY AND PUBLIC WORKS

**FINAL DOCUMENT, PUBLISHED PURSUANT TO RULE OF PROCEDURE 127
AND RELATING TO:**

the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions – Towards a circular economy: A zero waste programme for Europe (COM(2014)398 final/2)

Approved 20 January 2016

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions – Towards a circular economy: A zero waste programme for Europe
COM(2014) 398 final/2**

FINAL DOCUMENT APPROVED BY THE COMMITTEE

The Standing Committee on the Environment, Land and Public Works,

having examined, in accordance with Rule of Procedure 127, paragraph 1, the European Commission's Communication "Towards a circular economy: A zero waste programme for Europe" (COM(2014)398);

welcoming the Commission's initiative, which is part of a series of actions already taken to encourage the transition to a sustainable, competitive and low-carbon economy that will make an effective contribution to the fight against climate change and places the EU at the forefront of international efforts in this sense;

noting that:

the transition from a linear economy, predicated on the manufacture, use and, ultimately, the disposal of goods, to a circular economy, in which the materials and energy used in manufacturing are designed to retain their value for as long as possible, waste is kept to a minimum, and as few resources as possible are

used, serves a dual purpose: a) to reduce the environmental impact of economic activities; and, b) from a more purely economic perspective, to generate savings by preventing waste and reducing the costs to the EU of procuring raw materials and resources from external suppliers, while, at the same time, opening new prospects for skilled jobs;

the transition affects all citizens and businesses because it entails radical changes in economic structure, social organisation, business practices and consumer behaviour, and we therefore welcome the Commission's decision to carry out a wide-ranging public consultation on its initiative;

in the drive towards a circular economy, the disposal of waste is of particular, albeit not exclusive, significance. The amount sent to landfill needs to be reduced, and more waste needs to be processed using techniques that mitigate its environmental impact and extend the opportunities for the reuse of materials;

mindful that the present final document needs to be transmitted promptly to the European Commission as part of the political dialogue, as well as to the European Parliament and the Council;

expresses a

FAVOURABLE OPINION

with the following remarks:

a) while the changes being proposed certainly hold out the prospect of significant employment opportunities and economic benefits in the form of cost savings and new investments, so radical and sweeping are they that a significant financial commitment is going to be needed, especially during the first phase, for the conversion of manufacturing and organisational systems. The European Commission's guidelines will therefore have to be accompanied by an adequate financial framework that identifies all the resources that can be mobilised, including funding from the EIB;

b) the entirely creditable objectives set by the Commission will have to be achieved without freighting Europe's economic systems with unsustainable debts that would further impair the competitiveness of the EU, which is already suffering from the longest and most severe economic crisis since World War II and from the competition of emerging countries;

c) above all, it is important to ascertain whether government and public sector investment, particularly in improving waste management, can be encouraged

through incentive schemes, possibly by uncoupling the related investment costs from the calculation of state expenditure for the purpose of the Stability Pact, or else by rewarding those programmes that, measured with reference to best practices, are making significant progress towards the desired goal. The adoption of such an approach would be particularly apt for our country which, even though it is achieving respectable levels of energy efficiency and resource productivity, especially considering the nature of its system of production, will be expected to expend considerable effort on drastically reducing its reliance on landfill;

d) since putting the objectives set by the Commission into actual practice means adopting a coordinated and systemised set of standards and rules that will affect several industries and areas of the economy, it follows that the standards and rules need to be entirely consistent and free of internal contradictions.