



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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C(2017) 7033 final

Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion on the Report on the implementation of the Circular Economy Action Plan {COM(2017) 33 final}.

The Commission welcomes the Senato della Repubblica's overall support for the transition to a Circular Economy. In particular it appreciates the Senato della Repubblica's acknowledgement that national guidelines accompanied by a strategy on the circular economy would foster the national transition in a more comprehensive perspective. The Commission also shares the Senato della Repubblica's views about the benefits deriving from increased waste water re-use and from reducing food waste.

The Commission has taken good note of the Senato della Repubblica's recommendations concerning the more technical elements of the Action Plan and would like to refer it to the attached annex for more detailed considerations.

The Commission hopes that the clarifications provided in this reply address the issues raised by the Senato della Repubblica and looks forward to continuing the political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

*Frans Timmermans
First Vice-President*

*Karmenu Vella
Member of the Commission*

*Mr Pietro GRASSO
President of the
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ANNEX

The Commission has carefully considered each of the issues raised by the Senato della Repubblica in its Opinion, and is pleased to offer the following clarifications:

On ecodesign and recycling

By the end of 2017, the Commission will prepare an initiative at the interface between chemicals, products and waste legislation to address the uncertainties also identified by the Senato della Repubblica in its Opinion. This initiative will propose options pursuing both the objective to substitute or reduce the presence of chemicals of concerns in products and to facilitate recycling and improve the uptake of secondary raw materials, by limiting unnecessary burdens, and facilitating the cross-border circulation of secondary raw materials to ease their trade across the European Union.

As far as eco-design and life-cycle approach is concerned, the Commission wishes to stress that it is at the core of its initiatives on sustainable products, as demonstrated for example by the work developed in the context of the Pilot of the Environmental Footprint for Products.

Furthermore, the Commission supports the development of new business models aimed at extend the life of products (remanufacturing, repairs café, etc.) and notes that these are often more successful if developed at local level.

On incentives to use by-products

The valorisation of by-products is key to optimize material flows and support the transition to a circular economy. In this context, the proposal amending the Waste Directive ¹aims to clarify the framework for by-products with a view to provide more certainty to economic operators.

On recycled plastics and bio-based plastics

By the end of 2017 the Commission will prepare a Strategy on Plastics which will address plastic waste prevention and littering as well as improve the economics and quality of plastics recycling. In this context, the Commission will address recycled content and bio-based plastics.

On environmental taxation

As regards the revision of current incentives and forms of tax relief, the Commission has indeed studied in-depth the application of economic instruments in the area of waste management in particular landfill and incineration taxes and fees (and bans to provide context for the charges), pay-as-you-throw schemes as well as producer responsibility schemes.

¹ Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2008/98/EC on waste {COM(2015) 595 final}.

Beyond these market-based instruments, the Commission has observed and analysed other economic instruments used by Member States in this field. In this context, it encourages Member States to provide incentives and use economic instruments, such as taxation, to ensure that product prices better reflect environmental costs.

On green public procurement

The Commission considers that green public procurement (i.e. the procurement by public authorities of goods with reduced environmental impact) can play an important role in promoting an increased use of recycled materials in products by facilitating the access of such products to public markets and improving their economic viability, provided that a producer's claims on recycled content can be easily verified.

In view to encourage wider green public procurement practices, the Commission refers public authorities to its handbook "Buying green" issued in April 2017. Moreover, the Commission will provide updated training materials on green public procurement in 2018 and support training activities for public procurers in the coming years. It is also looking at the possibility to include an indicator on green public procurement in the Monitoring Framework for the transition to a circular economy that is scheduled for adoption by the end of 2017.

The definition of priorities for new development and revision of European Union criteria on green public procurement in the coming years is currently ongoing in the framework of the work undertaken by the Green Public Procurement Advisory Group.

On Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment

The Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment² Directive from 2012 introduced provisions to reduce burdens for producers of electrical and electronic equipment by providing for reimbursement of multiple compliance scheme contributions, and by clarifying that an authorised representative is required for the purpose of registration, though not a national legal seat. In order to ensure uniform conditions as regards registration and reporting of producers of electrical and electronic equipment to the national registers, the Commission is planning to adopt (in early 2018) an implementing act establishing a common format for registration and reporting. This is expected to be particularly beneficial for online sellers of electrical and electronic equipment operating in more than one Member State.

The Commission is also monitoring the achievement of the collection, recycling and recovery targets laid down in the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Directive, and has launched a targeted compliance promotion initiative to identify gaps and good practices in management of waste electrical and electronic equipment in the European Union, and also to address some of the issues identified in the Countering Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Illegal Trade project.

On repair and re-use

To facilitate material flows, the Commission proposes to provide a more active role to the competent national authorities in determining the end-of-waste status as a result of a recovery operation to promote industrial symbiosis and secondary raw material markets while at the same time safeguarding the objectives of environmental policy.

On extended producer responsibility

With regard to extended producer responsibility schemes, the Commission shares the Senato della Repubblica's views on the key role of businesses in this area and the related challenges for appropriate implementation. In order to make these schemes more effective, the proposal amending the Waste Directive introduces minimum requirements to improve their governance and cost-efficiency to ensure a level playing field in the European Union.

On food waste

In the context of the Circular Economy Action Plan, the Commission in 2016 launched the European Union Platform for Food Losses and Food Waste with the aim, among others, to support consistent implementation of the future legislation based on the proposal amending the Waste Directive.

² Directive 2012/19/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 July 2012 on waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE), OJ L 197, 24.7.2012, p. 38.