



Advisory Group on a 'Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy'

Meeting Thursday 21 May 2020

Discussion Note – Waste Actions for a Circular Economy

Half of total GHG emissions and more than 90% of biodiversity loss and water stress come from resource extraction and processing. By 2050, we will need three planet earths to meet our resource demands in a business as usual scenario. A transition to a circular economy offers the possibility of a sustainable alternative future.

Ireland is fully committed to transitioning to a Circular Economy.

EU strategies to further push Europe's economy towards a more circular model play a significant role in the 'European Green Deal' culminating in the second Circular Economy Action Plan launched in March 2020.

The [2020 Circular Economy Action Plan 'For a cleaner and more competitive Europe'](#) from the European Commission recognises the need to accelerate this transition to the entire mainstream economy. It takes a multi-dimensional approach to the many challenges:

- A new sustainable product policy framework that will leverage change through design, purchasing power and a new industrial strategy.
- It identifies seven key product value chains: electronics and ICT; batteries and vehicles; packaging; plastics; textiles; construction and buildings; and food, water and nutrients.

- It proposes six key actions on waste including waste reduction targets; harmonising collections; measures around substances of concern; scoping more EU-wide End-of-Waste criteria; revising shipment rules.
- Strategic **interventions** across skills, social policy, Just Transition, climate action, state aid and working globally.

Domestically, transposition this year of the revised EU Waste Directives will hardwire the new legal commitments agreed in 2018 on recycling and landfilling for 2025 and 2030 into the Irish economy and society. While the drive to meet the targets provides a starting point for the deeper changes required, more is being demanded of us even before these targets have taken effect. As you know a new national waste action plan is now being developed which will provide a roadmap for Ireland to embrace the opportunities in becoming a circular economy in the decade ahead.

At present, the EPA's **National Waste Prevention Programme** leads Ireland's efforts to progress our transition to a Circular Economy. It provides the tools and information to businesses, households, and the public sector to influence behavioural change and support sustainable choices.

Working with four sectors:

- Industry/enterprise; Research and innovation; Public sector bodies; Representative bodies

The NWPP is prioritising:

- Food Waste; Construction and Demolition; Plastics; Agriculture; Resources and Raw Materials and Local Waste Prevention.

Working with local authorities, businesses and communities, the **Regional Waste Management Plans** provide a strategic approach for the transition from waste management to a green circular economy up to 2021. Some of the key policies for local authorities contained in the plans include:

- Prioritise waste prevention through behavioural change activities to decouple economic growth and resource use.
- Establish reuse, repair, and preparing for reuse activities and networks
- Optimise the value of recycled and residual waste resources in the system

- Identify and promote the growth of secondary material markets and enterprises
- Contribute to the greening of public procurement in local authorities

Current policy measures:

- Establishment of a Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy Advisory Group.
- Publication of a new Waste Action Plan for a Circular Economy.
- Transposition and implementation of 2018 revised EU Waste legislation.

Planned policy measures:

- Re-constitute EPA NWPP as Ireland's Circular Economy Programme;
- Replace Regional Waste Management Plans with Regional Circular Economy Strategies;
- All of Government engagement in a new Circular Economy dialogue. Support and drive further and better implementation of CE principles across Government and at EU level;
- Consultation for the development of an All-Sector Circular Economy Strategy for Ireland providing long term policy direction;
- Maximise supports Ireland can draw down from EU funds for CE projects.

Potential actions to shift focus higher up product life-cycle

- Develop national / regional waste reduction targets;
- Develop national-level End of Waste / By-product decisions for certain materials;
- Waste prevention targets for specific streams and on resource consumption;
- Targets for re-use and repair;
- Targets to reduce contamination levels in segregated waste collection system;
- Develop sectoral Circular Economy charters (e.g. in relation to textiles, materials consumption, energy / water usage), building on the Food Waste Charter.

Discussion Questions – Waste Actions in a Circular Economy

1. What are the top 3 waste management policy initiatives required to support a transition to a Circular Economy in Ireland?
2. How do we ensure that the Circular Economy is embedded into economic recovery in a post-Covid-19 context?
3. What are the costs/benefits of introducing national performance targets for the following?
 - a. Material streams such as food waste and textiles
 - b. Resource consumption
 - c. Reuse and repair
 - d. Contamination levels in municipal waste streams
4. What changes are required in Ireland to ensure 'End of Waste' and other consent processes can support circular economy innovation?
5. How can we promote greater awareness of the Circular Economy amongst businesses and citizens?
6. What undertakings can business sectors such as retailers (food/electrical/textiles), manufacturers and food producers offer to promote circular economy practices?
7. Is there a role for a further extension of Extended Producer Responsibility schemes across products such as textiles, food and building materials?
8. What are the areas with greatest potential for transformation in Ireland under the Circular Economy?