

Abstract for ATHENS-2017

5th International Conference on Sustainable Solid Waste Management

21 – 24 June 2017, Athens, Greece

Submission for presentation in plenary or parallel sessions in relation to several topics, including “EU policies and strategies for solid waste management” and “Solid waste prevention techniques”.

Presented by: Robbert Droop¹,

Circular Economy Is More Than Recycling

The European and National Policies In Support

Recycling is not enough to face upcoming societal and environmental challenges

Currently, we use our raw materials and fossil fuels too often as if they are inexhaustible. We make products as cheap as possible and too often throw them away after use but not yet useless. This presents considerable problems for the environment when sourcing and processing raw materials, but also during use and after end-of-life of products. Waste management, even when in an environmentally responsible manner, is a waste of resources. Moreover, it presents a large economic loss, even though that is often not evident at the short term. In order to avoid these costs to environment and economy, the concept of a circular economy aims to use only resources which are available in abundance, minimize resources use and close the cycles of resources without loss of value nor affecting its integrity, and maintain the ecosystem in support of such circular economy.

This was reason for the European Commission to present its proposals for amendment of existing waste management directives in support of the circular economy, and to present an Action Plan for supportive policy initiatives.

EU-Governments prepare their policies in support of circular economy

National Governments in the EU support the plans from the European Commission. This was expressed in Council Conclusions (Environment) on 20 June 2016, together with a call for more measures at the national and European levels, in support of private sector to innovate and change in time to survive the transition to a circular economy.

In a circular economy, private sector will deal with natural resources in a much smarter way. The sector will use and consume as little as possible, and maximise the reuse of raw materials. It will

¹ Robbert Droop is a Policy Coordinator for Circular Economy in Europe, working at the Netherlands’ Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment, Sustainability Directorate. In that capacity he has led the discussions in Council about the proposals from the European Commission for amendment of waste legislation and supportive Action Plan (the “CE Package”). Furthermore, Robbert represents The Netherlands in several fora, including Horizon2020-Societal Challenge 5 Environment, the Eco-Innovation Action Plan, and the EU Expert-Group on Circular Economy.

develop products and services that are more durable and find new, smart ways to produce them. Society will use products and services more intelligently by sharing them and passing them on. At end-of-life, products will be disassembled with as little loss of material characteristics as possible so that full recovery and reuse of the resources is possible. Thus the manufacturing industry will have (secondary) raw resources amply available. By doing that, society slowly and steadily builds a circular economy together.

Several governments introduced legislation and incentives in support of sustainable waste management. Other governments promote design-for-reuse or design-for-recycling, and . Examples include the German Resources Efficiency Programme and the French Law against "planned obsolescence" Some governments aim to mobilize society to actively contribute to transition to the circular economy. The Netherlands set its target at realizing a circular economy by 2050 through models of intensive cooperation between the several economic and societal actors, making use of the innovative capacities available among entrepreneurs and the market which seeks better products and services.

Government-wide Programme "A Circular Economy in The Netherlands by 2050"

In the government-wide programme "A Circular Economy in the Netherlands by 2050", the government outlines how we can convert our economy into a sustainability-driven, fully circular economy. To achieve this goal, we need to take action at every level of society and set clear objectives. The first objective is ambitious but not unachievable: a 50% reduction in the use of raw materials like minerals, fossil-based fuels and metals by 2030. This objective is in line with the level of ambition of countries comparable to the Netherlands. To realise the objectives set for 2030 and 2050, this year the government wants to conclude a Circular Economy Agreement with a variety of stakeholders. Together, we will investigate the problems that are impeding the realisation of our circular economy, and together we will come up with appropriate solutions.

Five major chains and sectors have priority

To accelerate the transition to a circular economy, the government plans to draw up "transition agendas" in which the five following chains and sectors have the highest priority: biomass and food, plastics, manufacturing, construction, and consumer goods. The government will support these priority chains and sectors so that by 2050 they will only be using sustainably produced, renewable or generally available raw materials, and be generating as little residual waste as possible. Another of our aims is for products that reach their end of life to undergo high-quality recycling and be used to make new products. Smart return and collection systems will be set up to this end. We will do everything we can to ensure that consumers, businesses and authorities handle their products with due care, also when they reach their end of life. In this way, end-of-life products and materials remain invaluable in our economy.

At the June 2017 conference Athens2017, we will be able to inform participants about the latest developments in developing these transition agendas.

You can find all information on the NL-programme at www.government.nl/topics/circular-economy