New Circular Economy Action Plan

2020/2077(INI) - 10/02/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 574 votes to 22, with 95 abstentions, a resolution on the new circular economy action plan.

While welcoming the Commission's new circular economy action plan (CEAP), Members called on the Commission to propose binding EU targets for 2030 to significantly reduce the EU's raw material and consumption footprints and bring them within global limits by 2050. In this context, the Commission should introduce harmonised, comparable and uniform circular economy indicators by 2021.

A framework for action for sustainable products

Parliament stressed that durable, circular, safe and non-toxic products and materials should become the norm in the EU market and not the exception and should be regarded as the default choice that is attractive, affordable and accessible to all consumers. It welcomed the Commission's plan to present a legislative initiative on sustainable products to define horizontal principles for product policy and binding requirements for products placed on the EU market.

Members also approved broadening the scope of the Ecodesign Directive to include non-energy related products and to introduce horizontal sustainability principles and product-specific standards for performance, durability, reusability, reparability, non-toxicity, upgradeability, recyclability and resource and energy efficiency for products placed on the EU market. It invited the Commission to present a proposal to this effect in 2021.

The resolution focused not only on resource efficiency targets per product category, but also on the introduction of product-specific targets for recycled components, while ensuring the performance and safety of products, based on reliable calculation methods.

Empowering consumers and public purchasers and investing in innovative technologies

Parliament supported the plan to introduce digital passports for products to help businesses, consumers and market surveillance authorities to keep track of a product’s climate, environmental, social and other impacts throughout the value chain.

The resolution insisted, *inter alia*, on the need to:

- strengthen the EU's eco-label as a benchmark for environmental sustainability;

- facilitate the decision-making process of consumers through clear and easily understandable harmonised labelling, which could take the form of an index of the sustainability of products and their reparability;

- ensure free access for all stakeholders to the necessary information on repair and maintenance, including information on spare parts and software updates;

- stop practices leading to planned obsolescence through legislative measures;

- support the development of high-quality infrastructure for the collection, sorting, reuse and recycling of materials;

- support research and innovation in areas related to (i) recycling processes and technologies, (ii) resource efficiency in industrial processes, (iii) innovative and sustainable materials, technologies and services and their industrial scale-up, and (iv) the bio-economy;

- introduce green public procurement as part of the recovery of the EU economy; the Commission should present a legislative proposal on green public procurement procedures.

Key product value chains

The resolution supported the Commission's proposal for the selection of seven sectors as main value chains in the ECAP, namely (i) electronics and ICT; (ii) batteries and vehicles packaging; (iii) plastics; (iv) textiles; (v) construction and buildings; (vi) food; (vii) water and nutrients. These sectors have enormous potential and will have a considerable impact on the development of a true circular economy. Parliament has made a series of recommendations for each of these sectors.

Less waste, more value

Parliament called on the Commission to propose binding waste reduction targets and to set targets to limit the generation of residual waste as part of the revision of the Waste Framework Directive and the Landfill Directive scheduled for 2024.

Recalling the EU's waste targets, the resolution stressed that the EU and the Member States should strengthen prevention and preparation for re-use, increase recycling and end landfill while minimising incineration, in line with the waste hierarchy.

Making the circular economy a reality for individuals, cities and regions

Parliament recognised the important role played by regional and local authorities and SMEs in the circular economy and waste management. It called on the Commission to ensure that circular economy principles are embedded in all practices and to support Member States in sharing knowledge and good practice in the circular economy. It stressed the key role of consumers in waste prevention and management and the need to facilitate the involvement of citizens in separate waste collection.

Global efforts

Parliament supported the Commission's ambition to revise the Waste Shipment Regulation in order to (i) ensure transparency and traceability of intra-EU trade in waste; (ii) halt the export to third countries of waste that harms the environment or human health; (iii) tackle unlawful behaviour more effectively with the aim of ensuring that all waste is treated in accordance with circular economy principles.

The resolution stressed the importance of requiring primary and secondary raw materials imported into the EU to meet standards of protection of human rights, human health and environmental protection standards that are equivalent to EU standards.