

EESC

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Dear members of the EESC,

The Dutch Council for the Environment and Infrastructure likes to thank the EESC for the organization of this public hearing. Since we are not able to visit this hearing, we like to send you by email our input for this hearing.

The Council for the Environment and Infrastructure (Raad voor de Leefomgeving en infrastructuur, Rli) advises the Dutch government and Parliament on strategic issues concerning the sustainable development of the living and working environment. The Council is independent, and offers solicited and unsolicited advice on long-term issues of strategic importance to the Netherlands. Through its integrated approach and strategic advice, the Council strives to provide greater depth and breadth to the political and social debate, and to improve the quality of decision-making processes. The council is member of the European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC). The EEAC is a network of advisory bodies established by national or regional governments.

In June 2015 the Council presented its advice on circular economy *Circular economy: from wish to practice* to the ministers of Environment and Economic Affairs.

http://en.rli.nl/sites/default/files/advice_rli_circular_economy_interactive_def.pdf

In this advice the Council pledges for a holistic and integrated approach towards circular economy – that is adopted as a strategic pillar in the vision and ambition of the government. This is necessary because a circular economy offers advantages that require the support and alignment of the social agenda (labour), education/ innovation agenda (new skills), financial agenda (fiscal change) and economic development agenda (independence, competitiveness), as well as the environmental agenda (waste regulations, environmental goals). Circular economy is a fundamental approach to our economy, but the advantages will only be harvested if we are willing to set goals and follow an aligned



enabling strategy. If we do not do so, the outcome of CE will be of little impact and CE will not be able to strengthen the economic power of our region.

The Council advises to develop a circular agenda for every administrative level. At each level, specific objectives need to be defined and measures need to be developed to achieve these goals. In local circular agenda's, the focus is on the local activities and material flows.

For the European level, our highest governance body, this means that an overall vision, ambition and framework for action (circular agenda) needs to be defined, that stretches across the various policy areas as well.

- Put the theme of circular economy on the agenda through all the European Councils;
- Develop a common European vision, in respect to which the Circular Economy package will likely prove helpful;
- Define common goals; What benefits do we need to create?
- Develop possible strategies to achieve a circular economy, including a proposal for a raw materials union package.

Does the Circular Economy package fulfill this agenda?

Although the current package is a first step in the right direction, the Council would like to share the following observations and raise the following questions:

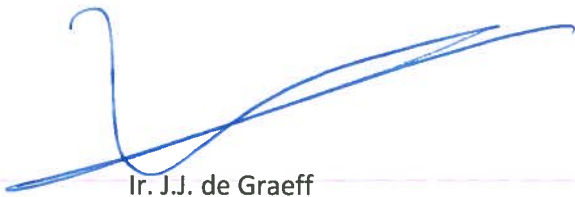
- The action plan can be considered as a start for a vision of the European Commission on the circular economy. The European Commission is clear that the circular economy is the direction for Europe in future. However what isn't clear is how the European Commission sees a circular Europe. What does it mean? How does Europe function in a circular economy? Which (product) chains are placed within Europe, which (product) chains are still global?
- Furthermore it is not sufficiently clear what the Commission's proposal considers the ambitions to be fulfilled in the European area? On which resources will the EU depend in the future? Which country will be expert on which issue within the circular economy system? In short, how do we ensure that we work together and reinforce each other instead of un-usefully competing with each other?
- Besides, the Council wonders what the EU strategy with respect to (grip on) raw materials will look like? Will we copy paste China in their strategy extraction of, and trade in, raw materials? Or do we foresee another pathway for Europe? And how to get transparency in raw material flows which come in the EU and where these flows go?

- Europe needs to formulate a common 'dot on the horizon'. From that dot we have to extract our goals. In the package, policy priorities as a climate change; employment, economic growth, investments and social justice are mentioned. Also creation of jobs, saving resources, environment and less waste are mentioned.

According to the Council the European Commission should be able to develop goals for the dependency for resources, for economic welfare and for reducing environmental pressure, with this set of priorities. These three goals are essential for developing a circular economy. Only with such goals the European Commission will be able to reflect on the instruments in the package and will be able to see if the measurements taken are sufficient or not.

We hope this information can help you with your input. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Ir. J.J. de Graeff

Chair



Dr. R. Hillebrand

Secretary General