

Briefing Note:

December 2015

The EU Circular Economy Package

- *This note is an extended version of an article by Edward Robinson which was first published on [Guardian Sustainable Business](#).*

On 2 December 2015, the European Commission published its proposals for the EU's Circular Economy package. The package is as wide-ranging as expected with a Roadmap containing 54 initiatives under six headings:

- 1) Production
- 2) Consumption
- 3) Waste Management
- 4) Markets for Secondary Raw Materials
- 5) Innovation and Investment
- 6) Monitoring

There were also plans for action in five priority sectors: plastics, food waste, critical raw materials, construction and demolition, and bio-mass and bio-based materials. As well as its official [Communication](#), the Commission also circulated a helpful [Annex](#) which lists the individual initiatives and gives a draft timeline for their adoption.

On top of the Roadmap, which may well take the remainder of the Juncker Commission's mandate to 2019 to enact in full, the Commission is also proposing amendments to the **waste directive**, the **electrical waste directive**, the **packaging waste directive** and the **landfill directive**. The focus of MEP and NGO reaction – which has mostly been negative – has been on the watering down of the targets for these areas:

- The target for reducing **municipal waste** has been cut from 70% to 65%
- The target for a complete **EU ban on landfill** by 2030 has been dropped in favour of a target to reduce landfill to a maximum of 10% of all waste by 2030
- A binding target to reduce **food-waste** is replaced with a vague proposal to “support the achievement of the (global) food waste reduction target under the UN Sustainable Development Goals”

But there have been welcome words for the decision to upgrade and extend the **eco-design directive** to cover a product's *durability, reparability, recyclability and upgradeability*. The current eco-design directive is restricted mainly to energy efficiency.

Indeed, it is likely that amendments to this directive will attract as much if not more lobbying than the changes to the headline waste and recycling targets. While the member states will probably take the lead on finalising legislation for municipal waste and food waste targets up to 2030, it's more likely to be private companies and trade associations weighing in on the eco-design elements.

Next steps

The package will now make its way to the European Parliament where the **ENVI Committee** is in the lead – backed up by the ITRE and the ECON and EMPL Committees. Most of the political groups are unhappy with the package at the moment and we expect that reinstating the full EU food waste target and pushing for practical but firm circular economy criteria to be inserted into the eco-design directive will be the focus of the MEPs' demands.

This is certainly the case according to the parliament's rapporteur for the package, the EPP's Sirpa Pietikäinen. She is supported by the respective leads (shadow rapporteurs) for the main political groups, the Socialists & Democrats, ALDE, the Greens and the Conservatives – although the latter (ECR) group has expressed fears of overregulation on the Circular Economy.