



Circular economy strategies and roadmaps in Europe: **Identifying synergies and the potential for cooperation and alliance building**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



European Economic and Social Committee



European Economic and Social Committee

Circular economy strategies and roadmaps in Europe

**Identifying synergies and the potential for cooperation
and alliance building**

Executive Summary

The information and views set out in this study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee. The European Economic and Social Committee does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this study.

Neither the European Economic and Social Committee nor any person acting on the European Economic and Social Committee's behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.

General information

STUDY FOR *The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)*

REQUESTING SERVICE *Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment Section*

STUDY MANAGING SERVICE *Relations with Organized Civil Society and Forward Studies Unit - Information Centre and Studies*

DATE *15/04/2019*

MAIN CONTRACTOR *Spatial Foresight GmbH*



AUTHORS *Giacomo Salvatori, Frank Holstein, Kai Böhme*
Language review: Tim Wills
Graphics and layout: Sebastian Hans

CONTACTS giacomo.salvatori@spatialforesight.eu
frank.holstein@spatialforesight.eu

IDENTIFIERS

		ISBN	doi
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY			
print	<i>QE-01-19-465-EN-C</i>	<i>978-92-830-4537-3</i>	<i>10.2864/64938</i>
PDF	<i>QE-01-19-465-EN-N</i>	<i>978-92-830-4540-3</i>	<i>10.2864/527493</i>

Executive summary

This report reviews circular economy strategies in support to the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (ECESP). Similarities and differences between circular economy strategies are reviewed to assist the ECESP in becoming more effective, particularly through collaboration and the involvement of civil society organisations.

33 documents have been reviewed for this study: 13 cover national levels, 9 regional, and 12 local levels. A higher number of strategies was found in areas where there were early strategy development activities, such as Belgium, Finland, the UK, and the Netherlands. The number of strategies at all levels is growing and the pace at which they are adopted is increasing (9 were approved in 2017, 12 in 2018). At least 29 new strategies are under development, which will bring the total number of strategies to over 60 at the end of 2019. Most new initiatives are at regional level in Spain, Portugal, and France, and at national level in central and eastern Europe. Upcoming strategies at regional and local level will improve the relative low number of documents at this level when compared to the national level.

Different approaches to inclusive circular economy models and thematic focus

Strategies are more effective when they address the circular economy comprehensively and include broad partnerships. To date, circular economy strategies show different degrees of inclusiveness in terms of horizontal tools and policies, sectors approached and partner involvement. Limited inclusive approaches can be explained by the exploratory nature of most documents: the circular economy approach and understanding is being tested, and broad, all-encompassing inclusive approaches are intended as subsequent steps of these developments. All strategies aim to further the transition to a circular economy, with slight differences depending on the territorial context. Strategies follow different approaches, either aiming to close material loops in specific value chains, or focusing on integrated, horizontal approaches.

Following this differentiation the reviewed strategies are categorised in three types:

- Integrated strategies, like the ones for Pääjat-Häme, France, Paris, Greece, Italy, Oslo, Poland, and Catalonia, largely focus on horizontal tools and policies. They aim at steering the public opinion toward the concept of circular economy.
- Strategies with a restricted sector focus, like Luxembourg, Amsterdam, Glasgow and London do not address a broad range of sectors. Including a large stakeholder base is also not a major concern, as normally only stakeholders directly linked to the selected loops are targeted.
- All-encompassing strategies with a clear setting of priorities, like strategies for Brussels, Denmark, and Scotland, keep a balance of the two approaches. Strategies of this kind most directly ensure the inclusion of both the broadest possible material loops and inclusive partnerships.

Strategies describe the economic sectors of manufacturing, food and feed and water processing in the most inclusive way. The most common economic sectors addressed are: manufacturing, construction, waste processing, and food and feed. The evolution of sectoral focus across geographies and time is analysed in the report. For instance, whereas early adopted strategies tend to focus on waste strategies and recycling, more aspects of value chains are increasingly considered in more recent strategies.

Horizontal topics introduce innovative concepts and practices that enhance circularity in multiple sectors. The implementation of horizontal sectors is closely linked to the capacity of strategies to be inclusive, both in terms of the comprehensiveness of value chains, and in stakeholder involvement. The most recurring horizontal sectors are: repairing reusing, and refurbishing; public procurement; design and eco-design; urban planning and development.

Partnerships supporting circular economy strategies

Circular economy strategies benefit from inclusive partnerships. Different players capable of providing the knowledge, funding or improving the regulation need to work together to bring about a paradigm shift. Strategies consider partner involvement in different ways. Public authorities have a key role in the strategies. In most cases they draft the strategies and have important roles in implementation. Civil society organisations have diverse roles in the reviewed strategies. Not every strategy specifically addresses this type of player, and their role is often behind the scenes, and not always explicitly reflected in the strategies. Civil society involvement is currently higher during strategy implementation than during strategy development. Although civil society organisations perceive themselves as co-developers and co-creators of strategies, they often have a role limited to implementation and dissemination. Civil society organisations can initiate grassroots movements in support of a circular economy, encourage their development and build links between different movements to scale up the initiatives. They can also provide knowledge on which strategies can be based.

Current state of play of inclusiveness and potential for future collaboration

All-encompassing strategies with a clear priority setting of sectors show the most inclusive thematic approaches. The most inclusive strategies are those considering balanced partnerships, involving all types of partners in different roles across the different stages of strategy development, and using different instruments for coordinating partner engagement. Combining these two aspects shows that the strategies for Flanders, Maribor, Finland, Porto and Denmark are the most inclusive. The strategies for Greece, Italy, and Paris have less inclusive approaches. There is a need for strategies to further develop inclusive approaches. Different ways forward are proposed following the review of strategies, encouraging collaboration between strategies and providing guidance in the form of an adaptable model strategy.

Civil society engagement has proven to be a valuable asset for policy makers; however most strategies fail to include the civil society's point of view at the onset of strategy development. The ECESP acts as an aggregation point, and it should continue doing so by highlighting the potential for improved quality of circular economy strategies when knowledge from civil society actors is taken full advantage of. The ECESP coordination group members can support increasing inclusive approaches, for instance by further developing the opportunities for collaboration proposed in this study, by promoting the model strategy, and by liaising with EU institutions to provide technical assistance.

Model strategy illustrating ways to enhance inclusiveness

To provide guidance to strategy developers willing to develop new strategies, or updating existing strategies, the report outlines an adaptable model strategy illustrating the key elements and needs of circular economy strategies, and collecting learnings from existing strategies that can be used to

develop new documents in a comprehensive way. Policy makers are invited to reflect on six elements of documents: rationale of the strategy; experience and links to other policies and strategies; strategy objectives; implementation measures; governance; and a monitoring and evaluation plan.

The use of the model strategy as a reference framework has the potential to improve the quality and consistency of strategies, contributing to a convergence toward a common understanding of the circular economy concept, eventually enabling a greater scope for collaboration between experiences in different territorial contexts. A convergence toward a more comprehensive and inclusive model strategy could also make for an enabling condition for more common tools and approaches at EU level.



European Economic and Social Committee

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99
1040 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË

Published by: "Visits and Publications" Unit
EESC-2019-54-EN
www.eesc.europa.eu



© European Union, 2019

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

For any use or reproduction of the photos/illustrations, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holder(s):
© Shutterstock: alphspirit



Print
QE-01-19-465-EN-C
ISBN 978-92-830-4537-3
doi:10.2864/64938

Online
QE-01-19-465-EN-N
ISBN 978-92-830-4540-3
doi:10.2864/527493

EN