



Speech by Marianne Overton, Spokesperson for Environment of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), Lincolnshire Councilor during the Conference – Waste legislation review – regions and cities for a circular economy, at the European Committee of the Regions (Brussels), 31 January 2017:

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Good afternoon everyone, my name is Marianne Overton and I am the spokesperson of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions in the field of Environment. It is a real pleasure to be here with you to discuss this crucial piece of legislation, a few days after the vote of the ENVI Committee at the European Parliament.

First I would like to introduce briefly the Council of European Municipalities and Regions: it is a European association of local and regional government that brings together the national associations of local and regional authorities and represents, through them, all levels of territories – local, intermediate and regional.

We all know that this whole package – including the review of the waste directive - is indeed crucial for local and regional authorities. A circular economy, where the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste minimised, is essential to develop a sustainable, low carbon, resource efficient economy. A transition towards a circular economy is also the opportunity to transform the economy and generate growth and jobs. It will also provide essential support to climate friendly strategies by minimising materials, water and energy consumption, GHG emissions and ensuring that these resources are continually cycling through the economy.

However, a successful implementation of circular economy implies the contribution from all stakeholders active in the chain (e.g. product designers, resource extractors, producers, distributors, consumers, collectors of end-of-life products and used water, recyclers, etc). In addition, actors that can have a direct influence or be directly impacted by the circular economy strategy should also be involved (e.g. citizens, local authorities, trade unions, academic establishments, financial institutions, etc.).

Across all Europe, we notice that municipalities in particular are increasingly embracing circular economy principles. As public service providers, we have extensive experience in sustainable waste management of course. Furthermore, we are updating and adapting policies, sharing knowledge, and encouraging innovation for less wasteful systems, for example through green public procurement.

I would like to emphasize only three points of CEMR position paper on the package.

First of all, we welcome that the Commission's proposal recognises the key role that local and regional authorities play in achieving common EU objectives for waste management and developing a circular economy. We call for a European multi-level governance model, built on active and constructive co-operation between the different levels of governance, and to further



develop this towards a 'governance in partnership' model, where all relevant actors work together to find common solutions on policies and legislation. We therefore welcome the fact that the Commission's proposal does not prevent member states from establishing, maintaining or shifting the responsibilities of local public waste collection in municipalities.

We think the definition of municipal waste provided by the European Commission needed to be broadened to make the implementation of waste policies easier. We therefore welcome the deletion of the quantity criteria adopted by the ENVI Committee last week. It is crucial to have a harmonised definition - together with standardised calculation method – to assess how Member-States are reaching their targets. We also welcome that the European Parliament improved the definition by stating that the directive shall apply regardless of the public or private status of the operator.

CEMR is also pleased that the Commission has proposed financial support for the transition towards the circular economy, drawing upon European funding sources such as the European Funding for Strategic Investment, the EU's cohesion policy and Horizon 2020. However, we request that further clarification be provided regarding the use of structural funds to improve waste management and contribute to achieving a circular economy. We call for an appropriate and effective financial framework to help local authorities to achieve EU targets and objectives.

These examples show how we can improve legislation on waste and circular economy in the European Union. But obviously, sustainable consumption and production is not only a European issue. This has been identified as the 12th Sustainable Development Goals in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development at the global level. It also aims at reducing greenhouse gas emissions by minimising transport for example and therefore contribute to tackling climate change. Ahead of COP22, the UN Climate Change Conference in Marrakech; CEMR, along with ACR+ - here today and OREE – a French institute working on this topic - has launched an international coalition of non-state actors on the circular economy. From local governments to businesses, academia, and NGOs, all non-state actors are important stakeholders in implementing the circular economy. Together, we will focus on awareness raising, exchange of best practices and capacity building, policy.

With these kind of actions, we demonstrate that local authorities are key partners in the transition towards a circular economy. As stated in the opinion of Mr Gambacorta adopted last year, there are initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors that are mobilising local and regional authorities across Europe and beyond to tackle climate change. We hope that similar initiatives will be stepping up the efforts of municipalities to boost resource efficiency, reduce waste and increase recycling, re-use and recovery of waste in cities. Because through local actions, municipalities pave the way towards a more sustainable society for the citizens.