

## A European Transition to a Circular Economy

Resolution submitted by *JEF Norway*

*Europe's consumption of energy and natural resources is disproportionately high, leading to an unacceptable ecological footprint. Every year the EU's inhabitants consume resources equivalent to that of the production of two and a half Earths. Furthermore, only about 12% of our resource consumption re-enters a production cycle through re-use, recycling or regeneration. Specifically, the EU countries annually extract more than 3 gigatons and import 500 megatons of raw building materials for construction, while 400 megatons of demolished materials are tossed away. Yet only 500 megatons of materials are reused. What is more, the EU annually produces more than 25 million tonnes of plastics, of which only 30% is recycled. The EU is also highly dependent on imports of raw materials, importing more than 1600 million tons of valuable raw materials each year. We know, however, that the extraction of raw materials accounts for a substantial amount of greenhouse gas emissions. In order to reduce our per capita footprint, mitigate climate change, and preserve resilient ecosystems, Europe must lead the transition to a new Circular Economy capable of regenerating, re-using and re-making natural resources.*

**JEF Europe,**

- *Recognises* the work of the European Commission to promote the Circular Economy through the Circular Economy Package of 2015 and revision of the Waste legislation (2018);
- *Welcomes* the EU's increased ambitions for European energy efficiency and emissions-reduction goals, in line with the Paris agreement of limiting warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius;
- *Points* to the fact that there is an alternative model to the linear economy of 'take-make-dispose';
- *Recognises* that a transition requires a set of new economic policies that places responsibility to retain the value of products, components and materials at the highest possible level, while reducing waste and leaks to a minimum;
- *Realises* that a transition necessitates more than mere Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, demanding coordinated practices across firms, corporations and markets – such as increased producer responsibility and “cradle-to-cradle” principles;



- *Recognises* the significant benefits associated with the Circular Economy, such as: reduced emissions, lower resource extraction rates, added jobs within re-use, recycling and regeneration businesses;
- *Conscious* that the transition to a more circular model for our economy has social consequences, and that actions need to be taken to ensure a fair transition for workers;
- *Aware* that the circular economy can be a driver for the development of the social and solidarity economy, at the local level and towards underprivileged segments of the population.

### **JEF Europe, therefore,**

1. *Invites* the EU to address the key barriers to transitioning to a truly Circular Economy in Europe;
2. *Calls* for a tax system that makes it beneficial to re-use, recycle, regenerate and use secondary raw materials, and that will support European projects of circular economy;
3. *Demands* that the cross-country trade of secondary resources is streamlined, and that the recycling of materials are promoted through harmonisation of policies;
4. *Invites* the EU to propose a coordinated waste management action plan in the EU, the lack of which complicates the long-term planning of material streams, trade and recycling across borders;
5. *Further calls* for the EU to take stronger actions to reduce waste and increase rates of recycling and reuse, for instance banning single-use plastics from being distributed where environmentally-friendly options exist;
6. *Demands* lower construction and demolition waste rates from the building sector, through modular building design and sustainable building materials;
7. *Suggests* that the EU Ecolabel must be the default sustainability branding throughout the EU, and demands that information campaigns towards consumers and producers are intensified;
8. *Suggests* that the EU should introduce material passports that provide information about the ecological footprint of each entity, enabling seamless trade of sustainable secondary materials across borders;
9. *Calls* for the EU to follow up on the Circular Economy Action Plan with an additional Implementation Report in 2019, monitoring in particular the progress made on the Member States' binding targets for circularity and recycling rates.