



# Towards circular cities

November 2017



As European cities, we are committed to making the transition to a more circular economy. Moving from a linear ‘take-make-waste’ to a circular approach is an urgent environmental necessity to dramatically reduce the current pressure on our natural resources. We must maintain products, materials and resources in the economy for as long as possible, and minimise the generation of waste. The transition towards a sustainable, low carbon and resource efficient economy is vital to our efforts to future-proof our cities and improve quality of life for citizens. We believe the circular economy is an opportunity to transform our economy, generating new and sustainable competitive advantages for Europe, and to stimulate job creation.

Our cities are all at different stages of the transition towards more circular societies. However, we have a shared understanding of our role and responsibilities, as well as being committed to learning together to accelerate the transition.

## Our role and responsibilities

As the level of government closest to citizens, we see that our societies are already on the path towards a circular transition through citizen and community based commitments and initiatives. We recognise our responsibility to facilitate and accelerate this transition, while ensuring that opportunities generates benefits for citizens, leaving no one behind. As city authorities, we hold a broad range of roles to achieve this.

- As policy makers: we can shape political debates and our policies, including on consumer behaviour, to facilitate the transition to the circular economy. We can create the right environment at the level of our cities and metropolitan areas to drive innovation and collaboration to unlock the potential of the transition.
  - As buyers of public goods and services: we can lead by example, using our public purchasing power in full support of a resource efficient, environmentally friendly, circular transition. We recognise that public sector procurement holds the largest potential to drive the move towards a circular economy.
  - As providers of services, including canteens or meal delivery, cities can make a difference in terms of prevention of food waste and show the way for restaurants and citizens to make sure that food waste is minimised and handled in best possible way.
  - As managers of waste collection: we have extensive experience in providing sustainable waste management as a service of general interest. We play a crucial role in improving waste management and transforming waste into raw materials. We integrate resource efficiency measures with economic and social policies, stimulating local job creation.
  - As facilitators of collaboration and matchmakers: we can build and support partnerships with local business, research organisations and community groups. A partnership approach, engaging all relevant stakeholders, is vital to ensuring momentum and a broad ownership of the circular transition process. We support our
-

local SMEs to manage business transition and recognise the role of our social enterprises in recovering goods, e.g. textiles, at the end of their lifecycle. This contributes to waste reduction and strengthens the social added value of the circular economy.

- As urban planners: we can manage our growth following circular principles in urban planning and development of city districts and public spaces. We can trigger new integrated approaches that reduce pressure on urban resources. A precondition for this is connecting our taxation, employment, economic development and waste management policies to accelerate circular transition.

## Moving forward together

As city authorities, we are committed to sharing our experiences and learning from each other to jointly build our capacity and speed up the transition towards circular cities. We will:

- seek to jointly develop our tools to monitor progress at city level in a circular way, considering the economic, social and environmental impact of the transition. We need to rethink our approach to data, currently based on our linear societal model, to adequately assess progress and to build evidence of the impact of the circular economy.
- work with our EU level partners, including the urban agenda partnership on circular economy, business organisations, the EU institutions and the circular economy stakeholder platform to support policy and programme developments at EU level from a city perspective.
- strengthen circular economy as a transversal theme in our own network to build capacity across all sectors to contribute to the transition process.

## What's needed from EU policy makers

Work with us to accelerate the transition towards a circular economic model. As city authorities, we are ready to play a strong role to future-fit our cities and Europe. To maximise the potential benefits of a circular economy, we need EU leadership, backing our efforts at city level and setting a strong enabling framework. This will include reviewing EU current and forthcoming legislation from the perspective of removing possible barriers to accelerating the circular economy<sup>1</sup>. In addition, we ask EU policy makers to:

- strengthen support for mutual learning and capacity building between cities across the EU, using the established effective tools for these purposes, including peer reviews and mentoring programmes. The outreach must be Europe-wide to accelerate the circular transition in the EU.
- stimulate and promote sustainable business models through an EU framework that considers the whole value chain. Public authorities and SMEs can do a great deal, but won't be able to maximise the potential of a circular economy on their own. We need EU's influence to get multinational business on board and expand already existing EU labels so that circular public procurement can be used for a wider variety of products.
- drive investments in jobs and skills for a circular future-fit work force for Europe, ensuring all citizens can benefit from the opportunities provided by a new economic model.
- facilitate the creation of a real market for secondary raw material, developing a level playing field between virgin material and the reuse of treated material. This include for example prompting reflection about taxation measures and fiscal reform in member states.
- strengthen the development of standards and indicators on the circular economy as well as the progress towards circular data to adequately measure the impact of a circular transition process.

---

<sup>1</sup> More detailed proposals are included in EUROCIITIES response to the circular economy package <http://bit.ly/2hRuWRT>, EUROCIITIES statement on plastic strategy in circular economy, <http://bit.ly/2hJrCbW>, EUROCIITIES statement on waste-to-energy in a circular economy: <http://bit.ly/2zdCNAe>. Attention should also be given to the forthcoming outcomes of the work on better regulation of the [urban agenda partnership on circular economy](#).