



The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC)

“Moving Towards Circular Economy” Study Guide

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Table of Contents

1. Welcoming Letter	3
2. Introduction to the committee	4
3. Introduction to the Topic	4
4. Definition of Key Terms	5
5. History of the topic.....	6
6. Legal Framework	8
7. Discussion of the topic	10
8. Actions Already Taken	16
9. Conclusion.....	17
10. Points to be addressed.....	18
11. Bibliography	18

1. Welcoming Letter

Honorable delegates,

It is our great pleasure to welcome you to ArcMUN 2020! We are really honoured to be chairing this year's Economic and Social Council, one of the most important decision-making bodies of the United Nations. Our topic of discussion will be **“Moving towards circular economy”**, and we will discuss how circular economy can be implemented in ways that benefit the environment as well as a nation's economy.

The aim of this study guide is to provide you with basic information and terminology regarding the topic, as well as important decisions and actions already taken. Building up on those resources, you are asked to think critically and conduct your own research in accordance with the points that are to be addressed (section 10 of the study guide) and your country's national policy.

We are convinced that you will study your topic well enough to have the confidence to get engaged in the most fruitful debates during the committee sessions. As chairs, we are committed to do our best in order for you to enjoy the most of this experience, so feel free to contact us for any questions you might have throughout your research.

We are looking forward to meeting you.

See you in March!

Your chairs,

Stergios Alexandridis (Main Chair) alexandridisstergios@gmail.com

Sevi Karnava (Co-Chair) karnavasevi@gmail.com

Ariadni Porfyridou (Junior Chair) ariadni@aegeanlp.com

2. Introduction to the committee

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was founded in 1946 by the UN Charter and since then, it operates as one of the six main organs of the United Nations. Its purpose is to function as a central forum, where economic and social issues are discussed and policy recommendations addressed to the Member States and the United Nations' system are formulated. The initiation of several studies on these issues and the assistance to the organizing of major international conferences related to the economic and social areas are within the domain of ECOSOC¹. It has succeeded in ensuring high standards of living, full employment and also, in identifying answers to international, social, economic and health problems. It is also responsible for fostering universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms². In the last decade, ECOSOC has altered its practices and framework to strengthen the Council and its operating methods. As a result, ECOSOC emphasizes in the integrated implementation of the results of all considerable United Nations meetings summits in the social, environmental, economic and related areas³. Now more than ever, due to the financial and environmental issues the is facing, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations is of utmost importance. Its focus lies on current urgent matters, such as economic development through different economic systems, the environment, food and security.

3. Introduction to the Topic

Nowadays, cities produce more than 2 billion tonnes of waste annually⁴ with this number only expected to grow in the following decades. Through the exploitation and over-consumption of finite natural resources our planet possesses, it is expected that at this rate

¹ *UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)*, Refworld, viewed 15 October 2019, <https://www.refworld.org/publisher/ECOSOC/RESOLUTION,,,0.html?fbclid=IwAR0w-0EXtngEmuPf591EEqSNDX-t4_TbqfGqkqpgQCvfoFpw11pxheB-Qc>

² The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, *Economic and Social Council*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, viewed 15 October 2019, <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Economic-and-Social-Council>>

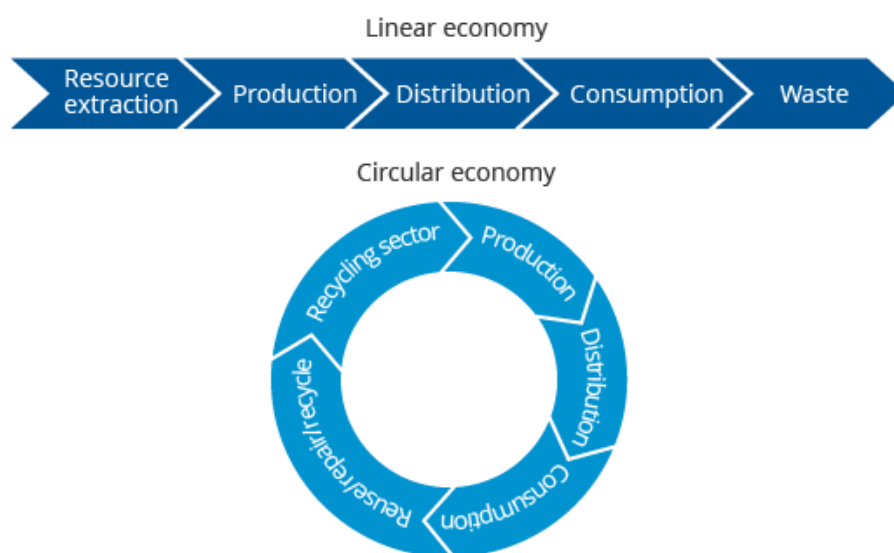
³ *About ECOSOC, UN Economic and Social Council*, viewed 15 October 2019, <<https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/about/>>

⁴ *Solid Waste Management 2019*, The World Bank, viewed 14 October 2019 <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/brief/solid-waste-management>>

these resources will be depleted in the future. The lack of proper programming and infrastructure to reuse and recycle solid waste being produced, also contributes significantly to the acceleration of this process. This ending conclusion is the outcome of the Linear economy that humans are living in. In this economic system, resources are extracted, then made into products, distributed to the people and after their consumption, get disposed off at landfills⁵. The solution that has earned many supporters in recent decades is the creation of a Circular Economic model.

Circular economy is the same as Linear, with the addition of another step before waste ending up at landfills. In this step, waste is recycled, re-used or repaired. After this step, the majority of the previous “waste” is transformed into usable products that re-enter the economic cycle, thus decreasing the waste getting thrown at landfills, or even completely eliminating it.

Addressing such an issue can be challenging, but also necessary to ensure the future generation’s prosperity. As such, it requires global cooperation, so as to overcome the obstacles that will be thoroughly examined in the following segments.



6

4. Definition of Key Terms

Circular Economy: According to the EU Action Plan, circular economy is the system “where the products, materials and resources are maintained in the economy for as long as possible

⁵ Cambridge dictionary, viewed 15 October 2019, <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/landfill>>

⁶ *The Circular Economy 2015*, Akzonobel, viewed 14 October 2019 <<https://report.akzonobel.com/2015/ar/case-studies/the-circular-economy.html>>

and the generation of waste is minimised”⁷. Another way to define circular economy is through the 3-R approach: reduce, reuse and recycle⁸. In this document, this term is also referred to as circularity.

Raw materials: Any material before being processed or used⁹, for instance cotton, iron, water etc.

Toxic Colonialism: the practice of exporting toxic waste to a weaker or poorer nation¹⁰, for instance the toxic waste incident in Nigeria that took place in 1988 (to be discussed in the section 7.5 of the document).

Consumerism: The excessive tendency of buying and owning things. This term refers to individuals, as well as societies in which vast amounts of goods are sold and purchased.¹¹

5. History of the topic

5.1 Consequences of the Industrial Revolution

Following the Industrial Revolution, a major socio economic shift occurred, changing the economic system people lived in. New technologies made it easier and cheaper for humans to extract resources and automation contributed significantly to the production process. Goods and services became more accessible to the working class, not only to the rich few. Subsequently, that made consumers change their behavior towards the goods they possessed. Due to the products being cheaper and easily accessible by them at the local market, consumers started buying new products to replace the old ones rather than repairing them, leading to overconsumption.

Companies adapted accordingly to this new era of overconsumption by providing consumers with a surplus of cheap products. They began making products less resilient by using

⁷NowThisWorld (2016), *Can a Circular Economy Make Trash Obsolete?* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgcWmE_2T6Q (Accessed: 14 October 2019)

⁸*What is the definition of a circular economy?* 2019, Het Groene Brein viewed 14 October 2019 <<https://kenniskaarten.hetgroenebrein.nl/en/knowledge-map-circular-economy/what-is-the-definition-a-circular-economy/>>

⁹Cambridge Dictionary, viewed 14 October 2019 <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/raw-material>>

¹⁰Oxford Reference, viewed 14 October 2019 <<https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803105117681>>

¹¹Cambridge Dictionary, viewed 14 October 2019 <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/consumerism>>

substitute materials that lowered the cost and in some cases deliberately building flaws in their products, so as to pressure consumers to buy more.

This unsustainable way of conducting business and the new consuming habits people adopted, fueled the Linear economy and created environmental and economical problems. According to the World Economic Forum, 82 billion tonnes of raw material will enter the economic system in 2020, a radical rise from 65 billion tonnes in 2010¹². This means that more air, water and soil pollution happens, due to the extraction of resources being energy intensive¹³. Furthermore, as raw materials become increasingly scarce, their prices will continue to rise. There already are increases in many basic products, such as food and fossil fuels.

5.2 Circular Economy

The idea of Circular economy can be traced back to the 1970's, but there is not a particular person responsible for its conception. There were a multitude of people, economists and environmentalists, who, in the past decades, have expressed their idea of Earth being a "closed system" and working in a circular form, hence the name Circular Economy. The first written document can be found by the author and economist Kenneth E. Boulding, who wrote 'The economics of a spaceship earth' in 1966¹⁴. Other economists who wrote about circular economy are David W. Pearce and R. Kerry Turner and their book "Economics of Natural Resources and the Environment" and are considered by many to be the expressors of the Circular Economic model we know it today¹⁵.

In the 21st century, there are many countries who are shifting towards a Circular Economy, primarily European countries. Most notably, Scandinavian countries are referred to as the global leaders on achieving to close the loop. With the use of technology and the strong economy they possess, they have managed to maximize their efficiency on recycling,

¹² *The limits of linear consumption*, World Economic Forum, viewed 14 October 2019
<http://reports.weforum.org/toward-the-circular-economy-accelerating-the-scale-up-across-global-supply-chains/the-limits-of-linear-consumption/?doing_wp_cron=1570369062.2905199527740478515625>

¹³ Cambridge Dictionary, viewed 15 October 2019, <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/energy-intensive>>

¹⁴ K. E. Boulding 1966, *The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth*, K.E. Boulding, viewed 14 October 2019, <<http://www.ub.edu/prometheus21/articulos/obsprometheus/BOULDING.pdf>>

¹⁵ NowThisWorld (2016), *Can a Circular Economy Make Trash Obsolete?* Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgcWmE_2T6Q&t=122s (Accessed: 14 October 2019)

promoted the idea of reusing products or refurbishing them¹⁶ and using waste in a manner which can provide electricity and heat. Sweden already has malls that are only selling refurbished items and burning their waste to produce electricity and provide heat in the process for their homes¹⁷.

Circular Economy has picked up steam in Africa as well. Due to the fact that Africa is a developing continent, its popululus is already accustomed to repairing and reusing its products. The Deputy Director of the UN Environment Ibrahim Thiaw said at the World Circular Economic Forum in 2017, that “...repairing is in the DNA of developing countries”¹⁸. Combined with the recent economic growth¹⁹ African countries have been experiencing in the past few years and with aid from the International community, they could succeed in closing the Linear Economy loop.

6. Legal Framework

Circular Economy is crucial to the international community when it comes to its financial development and its environmental health. It also can be the solution to many important matters that humanity is facing currently, such as **climate change**. Thus, an international legal framework has been shaped concerning this new and progressive type of economy and how it can be monitored. This Legal Framework contains:

- 1) The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They were written down and organized in a plan, which will contribute to the great endeavor and hope for a better world and thus a better future. Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the SDGs are the initiative all countries need to be activated in order to deal with poverty, to develop strategies that build economic growth, but most importantly tackle climate change and work to preserve oceans and forests worldwide. “The circular economy holds particular promise for achieving multiple SDGs, including SDGs 6 on energy, 8 on economic growth,

¹⁶K.Martinko 2017, *Swedish Shopping Centre Sells Only Refurbished Second-hand Items*, Treehugger, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.treehugger.com/corporate-responsibility/swedish-shopping-center-sells-only-refurbished-second-hand-items.html>>

¹⁷FRANCE 24 English (2018), *How Sweden is Turning its Waste into Gold*. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14r7f9khK70> (Accessed: 14 October 2019)

¹⁸D.J Cord 2017, *Ibrahim Thiaw: Developing Countries are Circular Economy Experts*, Sitra, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.sitra.fi/en/articles/ibrahim-thiaw-developing-countries-circular-economy-experts/>>

¹⁹*How Africa's Free-trade Zone will Provide an Economic Boom 2019*, World Economic Forum, viewed 15 October 2019, <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/07/africas-free-trade-zone-economic-boom/>>

11 on sustainable cities, 12 on sustainable consumption and production, 13 on climate change, 14 on oceans, and 15 on life on land.”

2) The European Commission has adopted and implemented a Circular Economy Monitoring Framework to measure advancement towards a circular economy at EU and nationally. Policy makers are enabled to recognize good practices and prioritize fields where more action is required to achieve the long term goal of a circular economy. It consists of a set of ten key indicators, which fulfill each phase (production, consumption, waste management and secondary raw materials) and financial aspects (investments, jobs, gross value added and innovation):

- Production and consumption: Some improvement can be distinguished towards more circular trends in production and consumption. Nevertheless, there is still substantial space for narrowing the gap in performance between Member States and across materials.
- Waste management: Waste management displays positive progress, yet there is also room for enhancement and differences among the Member States and across waste streams.
- Secondary raw materials: “The contribution of recycled materials to overall materials demand is relatively low.” Trade in secondary raw materials is rising in the EU and with third countries.
- Competitiveness and innovation: “The transition to a circular economy increases investments, value added and jobs, and stimulates innovation.”

Taking all the aforementioned points into consideration, there is a significant potential for more enhancement in the performance of the EU and its Member States. EU plays a greater role in some fields (such as trade in recyclable raw materials) than in others (e.g. green public procurement)

3) The European Commission adopted the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy in January 2018. This strategy was made in order to change the way that plastic products are designed, manufactured and recycled. Innovation is the key to the success of this action plan. Europe must be innovative and find a way to close this relentless loop of plastics. The ideology of the European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy indicates

that a way to make plastics circular must be found, in order to achieve the protection of our oceans and our environment.

4) The Circular Economy Action Plan also consists of a Communication on alternatives to address the connection between waste, chemical and product legislation that assesses how the regulations on chemicals, waste and products are associated with each other. The Communication is the outcome of evolutionary work between experts in various legislative fields. It examines the most significant matters which appear in the way the legislation on products, chemicals and waste function together and how these are impeding a circular economy development.

7. Discussion of the topic

7.1 The three principles and sections of circularity

Circular economy can be divided into three sections:

- Governmental action: legal framework, infrastructure etc.
- Corporations' action: product design and efficiency
- Citizen action: individual's lifestyle, recycling etc.

Additionally, according to the Ellen McArthur Foundation, circular economy is based on three fundamental principles:

- At the designing stage, the main goal is that products are made using methods and materials that minimize pollution and waste.
- Products' lifespan is extended.
- Natural resources are smartly used and restored²⁰.

7.2 The benefits of circular economy

Circular economy mostly concerns the environmental and economic performance and has significant benefits on both of them. To name a few:

- Circularity assists in combating climate change and other environmental threats. Depending on raw materials to produce more and more single-use products that do not last long, especially during an era when the world

²⁰ *What is a Circular Economy?*, Ellen MacArthur Foundation, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/concept>>

population is rapidly evolving, leads to scarcity of those materials as well as increased energy consumption and CO₂ emissions²¹. In that context, there is a need of creating high quality and long lasting products made of recycled and reused materials, or, in other words, producing more with less²².

- Enterprises are converting to Green industries and that requires the adoption of a different and more sustainable framework. That way, innovation and competitiveness is promoted between businesses²³.
- Plenty of new job opportunities are created due to the appearance of the environmental services sector, that promotes sustainability and provides aid to industries towards this pathway²⁴.
- According to the Ellen McArthur Foundation, businesses with a circular framework could save 1 trillion dollars from material costs by 2025, meaning that such initiatives could be proven profitable in the long run.

7.3 Leading Circular Economies

On an international scale, governments, institutions and businesses are encouraging or demanding the adoption of circularity practically, by including relevant measures in their legal frameworks or business models.

Regionally speaking, the European Union (EU) countries are demonstrating notable progress when it comes to embracing circularity. To be more precise, the European Commission adopted the Circular Economy Action Plan in 2015 and since then, most of the 54 actions have been implemented and there is still progress to be done in 2019 and further²⁵. Some of the most remarkable European countries when it comes to circular economy development

²¹ *Circular Economy: Definition, importance and benefits 2018*, European Parliament, viewed 14 October 2019, <<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20151201STO05603/circular-economy-definition-importance-and-benefits>>

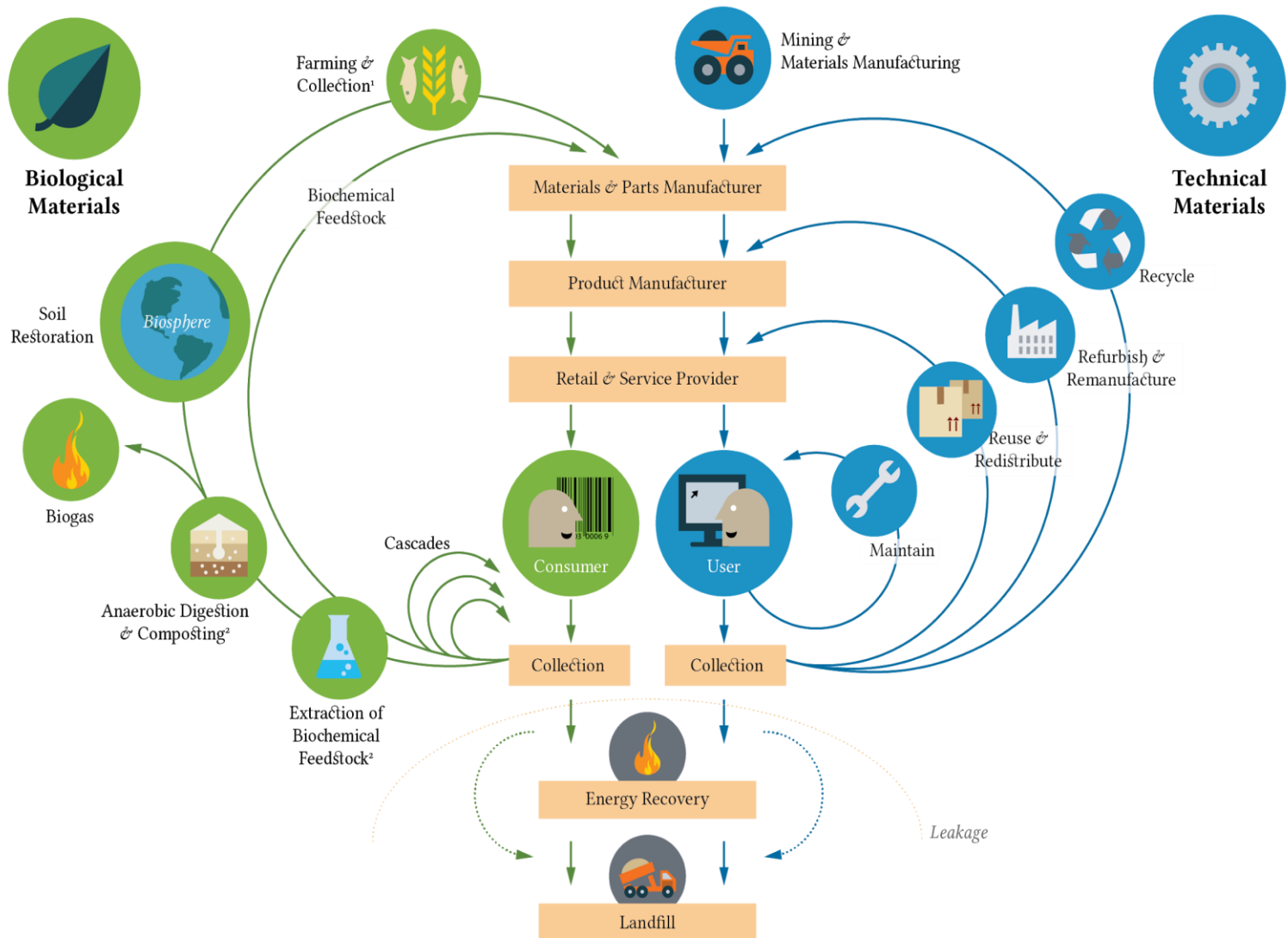
²² UNIDO 2011, *Green Industry for a Low-carbon Future*, UNIDO, viewed 14 October 2019, <https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2010-11/Green_Industry_Initiative_0.pdf>

²³ UNIDO 2011, *Green Industry for a Low-carbon Future*, UNIDO, viewed 14 October 2019, <https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2010-11/Green_Industry_Initiative_0.pdf>

²⁴ UNIDO 2011, *Green Industry for a Low-carbon Future*, UNIDO, viewed 14 October 2019, <https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/2010-11/Green_Industry_Initiative_0.pdf>

²⁵ European Commission 2019, *Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of Regions*, European Commission, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52019DC0190&from=EN>>

are Denmark, whose government's goal is to recycle 50% of household waste by 2022²⁶, the Dutch government, that is going to invest 80 million euros on the circular economy sector for the period 2019-2020²⁷, the rest of the Scandinavian countries, that are members of the Nordic Working Group for Circular Economy²⁸ etc.



Apart from the EU, the Chinese government was one of the first to adopt a law concerning reusing waste in 2008²⁹ and works closely with the EU on circularity matters³⁰. The Republic of

²⁶E.Braw 2014, *Five Countries Moving Ahead of the Pack on Circular Economy Legislation*, The Guardian, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2014/oct/29/countries-eu-circular-economy-legislation-denmark-sweden-scotland>>

²⁷J.Pieters 2019, *Dutch Government Pushes 80 Million Euros into Promoting Circular Economy*, NI Times, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://nltimes.nl/2019/07/10/dutch-govt-pushes-eu80-million-promoting-circular-economy>>

²⁸Nordic Working Group for Circular Economy, Nordic Co-operation, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.norden.org/en/nordic-working-group-for-circular-economy-NCE>>

²⁹UNIDO, *Circular Economy*, UNIDO, viewed 14 October 2019, <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/Circular_Economy_UNIDO_0_.pdf>

Korea also shows significant concern upon the matter by enacting the principle of circulation in 2017 (Korean ministry for the environment, 2017)³¹. Canada, lastly, gradually transits from linear to circular economy, and will also be hosting the 2020 Circular Economy Forum³².

7.4 Circular Economy Critics and Issues

The circular economy system, however, is not without its critics, since there are many obstacles and factors that need to be further explored and improved. Instead of decreasing, circularity and material reuse could increase production, as a result of the efficiency of the products that could lead to cheaper prices and, thus, higher demand, according to a research published by the Journal of Industrial Ecology³³.

Another issue of great weight is the doubt of circular economy's feasibility. Certain types of waste, for instance paper and some types of hazardous waste, are either recyclable at some extend or, due to their nature and properties, have to be disposed³⁴. That being said, the idea of a zero-waste economic model could not be achieved, since there are significant limitations regarding the recyclability of materials. In addition to that, circular practices might not be desirable by all businesses and corporations, for instance the strict use of renewable resources, recyclable and recycled materials etc³⁵. Businesses might also have to face the issue of the finished product being valued less than the process of recovering the materials for its production. All those obstacles, combined with the lack of incentives, make circular economy less desirable to corporations.

³⁰ European Commission 2019, *EU and China step up their Cooperation on Environment, Water and Circular Economy*, European Commission, viewed 14 October 2019, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/eu-and-china-step-their-cooperation-environment-water-and-circular-economy-2019-apr-01_en>

³¹ S. Yun, S. Vanhamaki 2018, *An Insight on Circular Economy in South Korea*, Lamkpub, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.lamkpub.fi/2018/11/30/an-insight-on-circular-economy-in-south-korea/>>

³² *Canada to host the 2020 World Economic Forum 2019*, Government of Canada, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/news/2019/06/canada-to-host-the-2020-world-circular-economy-forum.html>>

³³ M. Narberhaus, J. von Mitschke-Collande 2017, *Circular Economy Isn't a Magical fix for our Environmental woes*, The Guardian, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/jul/14/circular-economy-not-magical-fix-environmental-woes-global-corporations>>

³⁴ *Circular Economy: Critics and Challenges*, Circular Academy, viewed 14 October 2019, <<http://www.circular.academy/circular-economy-critics-and-challenges/>>

³⁵ *Circular Economy: Critics and Challenges*, Circular Academy, viewed 14 October 2019, <<http://www.circular.academy/circular-economy-critics-and-challenges/>>

Another important factor that interferes with the success of this economic system and needs to be taken well into consideration is consumer behavior.³⁶ No matter how efficient a product is, over consumption could undermine the system's efforts towards sustainability, since primary production is not minimized and, hence, all of its negative aspects (CO2 emissions, energy consumption, etc.) are not handled.³⁷ Thus, in order for circular economy to be established as a new economic system, changing consumers' mentality is of utmost significance.

7.4.1 The issue of toxic colonialism

All the achievements in the circular economy field are admittedly imposing, mainly when it comes to the EU or fully developed economies such as but not limited to China, however another significant question is whether developing economies and states are included in this process towards sustainability and prosperity.

More specifically, the phenomenon of dumping different types of waste, e-waste, for instance, mostly in developed African or Asian countries, has serious impacts both on those countries growing economy as well as on the citizens' life quality and well-being. According to the Guardian, tones of electronic devices, are thrown away in those countries dumping sites. Such a type of waste contains highly toxic and hazardous elements that can contaminate not only the soil, but also the air and water quality. Another point regarding the issue is that, according to the European Environment Agency, there is no track of the actual number of e-waste exiting Europe, and, as Interpol reveals, a significant amount of such waste is illegally transported to such nations³⁸.

This issue has triggered concerns among the international community and the UN, with the UN Environment African regional director calling for enhanced cooperation between the

³⁶I. Quale 2014, *Circular Economy: Just a Load of Rubbish?* Deutsche Welle, viewed 16 October 2019, <<https://www.dw.com/en/circular-economy-just-a-load-of-rubbish/a-17767516-0>>

³⁷K. Moss 2019, *Here's What Could go Wrong with the Circular Economy-and how to Keep it on Track*, World Resources Institute, viewed 16 October 2019, <<https://www.wri.org/blog/2019/08/here-s-what-could-go-wrong-circular-economy-and-how-keep-it-track>>

³⁸J. Vidal 2013, *Toxic 'E-waste' Dumped in Poor Nations, says United Nations*, The Guardian, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/dec/14/toxic-ewaste-illegal-dumping-developing-countries>>

affected nations³⁹. Regarding the actions already taken, the Basel Convention was signed in 1989 with the aim to control hazardous waste and forbid its dumping in developing nations. This convention was never ratified by the United States⁴⁰. In 1991, additionally, twelve African nations negotiated the Bamako Convention that prevents from dumping hazardous waste as well as managing existing wastes within the continent⁴¹. However, since the issue continues to exist, there are still problems and measures that need to be further discussed⁴².

7.5 Important incidents that hinder circular economy

Circularity is conceived differently by each and every nation and it can be a highly political issue, as proven by some significant events between states. In 2017, first of all, the Chinese government banned certain types of recycled paper and plastic from being imported in the country. As a result, the United States reacted, expressing their concerns when it comes to the negative impact on the US recycling industry⁴³.

Another important incident took place in 1988, when Italy paid citizens of a Nigerian village called Koko to store 18,000 drums of toxic waste it could not process. Initially, Italy claimed that the waste was not hazardous, however, as residents of the village were getting sick, the waste was removed by the Italian government. More recently, toxic waste was found in the same village by an international oil company in February 2017⁴⁴. A similar case concerned the Ivory Coast in 2006, when hundreds of tons of the freighter's Probo Koala was dumped in Abidjan, the largest city of the country. Due to this scandal, thousands of people got sick and

³⁹Water Journalists Africa 2017, *Waste Dumping in Africa Worries UN Environment*, Water Journalists Africa, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://waterjournalistsafrica.com/2018/02/waste-dumping-in-africa-worries-un-environment/>>

⁴⁰*Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal*, Basel Convention, viewed 14 October 2019, <www.basel.int/Countries/StatusofRatifications/PartiesSignatories/tabid/4499/Default.aspx#US16>

⁴¹*Bamako Convention: Preventing Africa from Becoming a Dumping Ground for Toxic Waste*, UN Environment, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/bamako-convention-preventing-africa-becoming-dumping-ground-toxic>>

⁴²O. Ogodu 2018, *Africa Needs to be Firm Against Toxic Waste Dumping*, Scidev Net, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://www.scidev.net/sub-saharan-africa/news/africa-toxic-wastes-dumping.html>>

⁴³C. Staub 2019, *China says it will ban certain recovered material imports*, Resource Recycling, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://resource-recycling.com/recycling/2017/07/19/china-says-it-will-ban-certain-recovered-material-imports/>>

⁴⁴S. Back 2017, *In the 1980s, Italy paid a Nigerian town \$100 a Month to Store Toxic Waste-and it is Happening Again*, Timeline, viewed 14 October 2019, <<https://timeline.com/koko-nigeria-italy-toxic-waste-159a6487b5aa>>

approximately eleven people were officially reported as dead just some months after the dumping⁴⁵.

8. Actions Already Taken

The Circular Economy and the management of waste in general is an alarming issue around the globe and concerns many member states of the UN. More specifically, several of them have taken actions to contribute to the national and international transition from a linear to a circular economy.

1) “In China, circular economy has become an increasingly important topic for national development.” China has organized and been integrated into its 12th and 13th Five-Year Plans and is supported by law and strategies (such as Circular Economy Promotion Law of the People’s Republic of China, Circular Development and Leading Action, and more). Since 2005 there have been many financial incentives and support for pilot projects. China is constantly introducing new legislation to improve the effectiveness of their circular economy and sustainability initiatives.

2) The European Union, following its Circular Economy Action Plan, has developed many legislations and projects concerning this matter. Nevertheless, there are countries in this union that have led this endeavor to achieve the transition to a circular economy. More specifically :

- a. In Belgium the circular economy concept is widely recognized within economic sectors. Various recycling policies are stimulating circular economy across the country. Many eco-innovative developments have been associated with the circular economy. The efforts continue in order to reach a better performance in the years to come to integrate further, Belgium’s circular economy.
- b. Finland has the ambition to become the global leader in circular economy by 2025. The country is working on different policy plans and circular economy initiatives are supported by various

⁴⁵P. Nahigyan 2015, *Abidjan: The Biggest Toxic Waste Scandal You’ve Ever Heard of*, Planet Experts, viewed 14 October 2019, <<http://www.planetexperts.com/abidjan-the-biggest-toxic-waste-scandal-youve-never-heard-of/>>

- regulations and green public procurement policies. The progress and support for circular economy innovation also depends on Research and Development (R&D) funding, which recently has been declined and the country faces this challenge.
- c. In France circular economy is actively driven by different laws and initiatives. Furthermore, the financial support for circular economy is substantial, but there are concerns that funding will decrease in the coming years putting more burden on the private sector for implementation. The main field for enhancement is the stimulation of circular economy friendly behaviors for individual consumption.
 - d. “Germany is a frontrunner for waste management but is lagging behind other EU Member States with promoting circular economy beyond the waste management sector.” Germany recently created various policies that integrate the lifecycle perspective of products. Policy obstructions to a circular economy have been made by investments in waste-to-energy facilities, leading to competing inducements for recycling of materials.
 - e. The Netherlands has ambitious sustainability plans that focus on waste management endeavors on green procurement. The Green Deal Program contributed in initiating almost over 200 projects in different areas. Identified obstructions for circular economy are the lack of knowledge to coordinate circular alterations and the lack of availability of finance. These barriers are addressed in the program “A Circular Economy in the Netherlands by 2050”.

9. Conclusion

Taking into consideration all the facts previously mentioned, circular economy has both its positive as well as negative aspects. However, it represents the evolution of the international economy. It can provide solutions for both environmental and economic issues and many Member States are already taking actions towards this pathway, each one on a different scale. Since this is a system that is still in a pilot phase, it is our duty as a committee to provide achievable and realistic solutions, bearing in mind the individuality of each state.

10. Points to be addressed

- In which ways can governments motivate recycling, both when it comes to businesses and individuals?
- How can developing nations be included in the shift towards circularity, bearing in mind the severe environmental situation in those countries?
- Which materials should be banned from the production process, if any?
- How can co-operation on an international level be enhanced?
- Can Circular Economy solution be enforced to all Member States and if yes how?

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