



CIRCULAR GROWTH – DEVELOPING THE URBAN MODEL

*Panel Chair: **Paddy Gray**, Professor Emeritus, University of Ulster, UK*

Earlier this year, the Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee organized a **Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference** in Brussels one year after the Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) was adopted. It was a great chance to report on the progress that had been made. It concluded that a holistic view of the Circular Economy was required and the quality of life and social aspects are extremely important.

According to **Frans Timmermans**, the first Vice-President of the European Commission, responsible for sustainable development,

„The circular economy is about reducing waste and protecting the environment, but it is also about a profound transformation of the way our entire economy works”

Key actions and potential impact on the housing sector are as follows:

- Measures in the Ecodesign working plan for 2015-2017 to promote reparability, durability and recyclability of products, in addition to energy efficiency;
- A strategy on plastics in the circular economy, addressing issues of recyclability, biodegradability, the presence of hazardous substances in plastics, and the Sustainable Development Goals target for significantly reducing marine litter;
- Actions to reduce food waste including a common measurement methodology, improved date marking, and tools to meet the global Sustainable Development Goal to halve food waste by 2030;
- A series of actions on water reuse including a legislative proposal on minimum requirements for the reuse of wastewater
- Economic incentives for producers to put greener products on the market and support recovery and recycling schemes (e.g. for packaging, batteries, electric and electronic equipment, vehicles)

Prof Vincent Gruis, Professor of Housing Management, Delft University of Technology, believes that:

“Creating a circular economy (CE) within the built environment is one of today’s big societal challenges. Creating housing that is not only energy efficient, but resource efficient is the next step in creating a sustainable housing provision. One of the ways to create a circular economy is to recycle building materials in new housing development and refurbishment. Another way is to make optimal use of the existing stock through maintenance and repurposing housing to new target groups”

So what will living spaces look like in years to come? Does the circular economy influence thinking on urban living conditions in respect to environment? The vision for a ‘circular city’ is helping to identify new opportunities for jobs and growth, while simultaneously addressing the complex urban problems outlined above, and as such has become a pillar of a development strategy .

The panel aims to encourage interdisciplinary debates on what the future of our living and working spaces should be. We welcome papers addressing the following issues:

- The future of Housing in the Circular Economy
- Social housing – as an important public good
- Recycling energy, waste, water - as goal of sustainable development of urban areas
- New strategies to sustain the urban areas development
- Building affordable houses