

CIRCULAR ECONOMY PROGRAMME IN GEORGIA 'TO MAP CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN GEORGIA'

Our traditional linear economy pattern follows the 'take-make-waste' scheme. This method of production maximizes the use of resources before transforming them into products, and eventually disposing of unusable material. It makes throw-away culture the norm, putting increasing pressure on natural resources and our climate.

The linear economy is countered by circular development, which is a model of socially and environmentally responsible production and consumption that aims to build a sustainable society. A circular economy is a systemic approach to economic development designed to benefit businesses, society, and the environment. In contrast to the 'take-make-waste' linear model, a circular economy is regenerative by design and aims to gradually decouple growth from the consumption of finite resources.

The transition to a circular economy requires a radical change in the way we produce and consume. In a circular economy, products are designed for durability, upgradeability, reparability and reusability, with a view to reusing the materials from which they are made after they reach the end of their life. In the use phase, products are managed with a view to maximising their utilisation capacity and extending their useful life, thus maintaining their value for as long as possible. This is made possible by companies that develop new business models generating revenue streams from services rather than products while making a more efficient use of resources and/or giving new value to end-of-life products and materials. Consumers use products efficiently and discard them in such a way that they can be reused or, if this is technically or economically unfeasible, recycling operators turn them into secondary materials that can enter a new production-consumption cycle. This needs to be supported by the whole system, from enabling technologies and infrastructures to a form of market organisation that facilitates collaboration along and across value chains and a form of governance and regulation that encourages companies to adopt circular approaches to social norms that make the circular production-consumption patterns socially preferable.

With the general objective of replacing the 'end-of-life' concept with an economic system that closes material loops, Georgia has recently embarked on an accelerated path to transition to the circular economy. With the concerted efforts of the Government of Georgia (GoG), civil society organisations, academia and international partners, Georgia has initiated the development of the circular economy strategy and roadmap based on a comprehensive multidimensional approach that covers production, consumption, waste management, secondary raw materials, innovation, investments as well as ongoing initiatives in different sectors implemented by different players that are at different stages of the value chain or different stages of development.

The first step in the accelerated transition to circularity is the mapping how circular is the economy of Georgia and developing recommendations for the Circular Economy Strategy. This initiative was commenced in 2020 as a part of the ongoing circular economy programme implemented by CSO Georgian Society of Nature Explorers "Orchis" (GSNE "Orchis") in close cooperation with the GoG and with the financial support of the Government of Sweden. The key objectives of the circularity mapping call for a close collaboration between the task team and the GoG to adequately assess the current level of circularity, establish appropriate national quantitative circular economy policy targets and circular ambitions, identify sectoral opportunities, define sector-specific policy options and subsequently develop recommendations for the Circular Economy Roadmap and Strategy of Georgia.

The implementation of the circular economy programme is led by the International Expert in the Circular Economy. He is supported by the local experts having a sound knowledge of the Georgian economy and environmental, social, governance and sustainable development issues. For the circular economy mapping process, the GoG formed an Inter-Ministerial Working Group (the Coordination Board of the GoG), which includes key representatives of different government departments to ensure broad expertise and early buy-in from them. Strong collaborative relations have been established with the Coordination Board, and other key stakeholders including different governmental departments and agencies, businesses and business associations, municipalities, etc. have been also engaged in the mapping process through intensive consultations.

The circularity mapping is a complex process. To perform it, the task team has conducted a three step assessment of economic sectors of Georgia in terms of circularity. At the initial stage a screening exercise was conducted to select

out of the 90 sectors (economic activities) listed in the register of National Office of Statistics those sectors, which may be prospective for transition to circular models of economy. Two simple criteria have been used for screening: economic criteria characterizing the role of the sector in the country's economy (input in GDP; annual production; number of employees); and volumes of waste generated or losses. As a result of the screening, 14 sectors have been identified as having certain potential (medium; high; extremely high) for developing circularity.

At the second stage, based on information provided by the members of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group, statistic data available in official data archives and studies and reviews of the recent years, the task team has assessed the 14 selected sectors and prepared a snap-shot description of each, including mass flows of materials (raw materials, products, byproducts and wastes), losses and wastes generated, share of recycled wastes and estimation of potential for recycling.

At the third stage, based on the snap-shot description of sectors of economy, re-estimation of potential of each sector, prioritization and clustering has been performed.

Based on the described mapping process, the Circularity Mapping Report is being prepared for Georgia to provide a snap-shot picture of economy with circularity highlight, and recommendations how circularity level could be increased. At present major portion of the Circularity Mapping Report is already drafted, and the draft document will be made available shortly, considering feedback of key stakeholders obtained on the fourth plenary meeting when main findings and circularity recommendations will be presented, and the roundtable discussion on the vision, ambition level and perspectives for Georgia will be organized for the Inter-Ministerial Working Group.