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#### D.T.1.1.1 CEWG WORKSHOPS Mapping Report

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## Aim

This report demonstrates the conclusions of the two CEWG meetings organized – the first on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and the second on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, by Greek Exporters Association - SEVE in the region of Central Macedonia, Greece where PB2 is situated.

The meetings' participants represented  
National / Regional / Local Authorities and regional agencies: 5  
Infrastructure and public service providers: 5  
Interest groups including NGO's: 3  
Higher education and Research, Training Centers: 12  
Business Support Organisations, SMEs, enterprises: 24

## The presentations were focused on

- **Circular economy action plan**

The European Commission adopted the [new circular economy action plan \(CEAP\)](#) in March 2020. It is one of the main building blocks of the [European Green Deal](#), Europe's new agenda for sustainable growth. The EU's transition to a circular economy will reduce pressure on natural resources and will create sustainable growth and jobs. It is also a prerequisite to achieve the EU's 2050 climate neutrality target and to halt biodiversity loss.

1. The new action plan announces initiatives along the entire life cycle of products. It targets how products are designed, promotes circular economy processes, encourages sustainable consumption, and aims to ensure that waste is prevented and the resources used are kept in the EU economy for as long as possible.
2. It introduces legislative and non-legislative measures targeting areas where action at the EU level brings real added value.

- **National Circular Economy action plan**

Greece's Governmental Economic Policy Council endorsed a **National Action Plan on Circular Economy** in early 2018 to set the country on a path towards the long-term adoption of circular economy principles. This further **supports Greece's economic strategy in its key quest to "Green" the economy in a way that creates jobs**, especially for women and youth, **and supports long-term equitable and inclusive growth** based on resource efficiency, promotion of SMEs, innovation and investment in new technologies, and strengthening of the "social economy" potential. The long-term (2030) goals of the National Action Plan on Circular Economy can be summarized as follows:

- moving up the waste hierarchy by focusing on preventing waste and improving recycling
- supporting circular entrepreneurship by promoting "industrial symbiosis" and business clusters
- supporting circular consumption patterns of re-using, re-storing and re-pairing rather than buying new products, especially for electrical and electronic devices



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- enhancing multi-stakeholder partnerships across industry, academia, and civil society
- monitoring progress towards a circular economic model through SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) indicators.

- **New climate law**

The draft climate law, which will be posted for public consultation, “is extremely ambitious.” It raises the bar, as it does not simply bring EU targets into the national body of laws, but it supplements them, updates them, and oftentimes exceeds them. It is very up-to-date legislation that shows Greece is a pioneer on issues of climate change.

The law will set quantitative targets to reduce greenhouse emissions by 55 percent in 2030 compared to 1990, and by 80 percent in 2040, aiming for climate neutrality in 2050, the EU target.

- SEVE’s participation in the Advisory committee of productive bodies for the Circular Economy of Greek Ministry of environment and energy.

### **The main findings were:**

Although Greece has a very small carbon footprint, being a very small country, it can contribute substantially to the green transition in addition to the ambitious European targets for reducing emissions by 55% until 2030.

The alternative model at a global level, which can make the existing traditional model of the linear economy outdated and practically useless, is the model of the circular economy.

### **The round table discussion**

Referred mainly to topics such as:

- Approximately 300,000 tones / year of industrial by-products are used as alternative raw materials
- Over 100,000 tons / year are used as alternative fuels
- The basic value chains of EU products have to implementing an Action Plan for the circular economy

Higher pressure categories are:

Greenhouse gas emissions  
Electronic products and ICT  
Batteries and vehicles  
Packaging materials  
Plastic  
Textiles  
Constructions and buildings  
Food, water and nutrients

- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions - climate change
- Saving natural resources



- Reduction of the uncontrolled rejection of Construction Materials

Circularity has financial and practical limitations that should be taken into account. For example, recycling has physical limitations, while the recycling of long lifespan products can be difficult, costly and more energy consuming. Large investments might be required in advanced technologies and in modernizing existing facilities and equipment. Financial barriers could hinder these investments, which require intensive funding and economic incentives.

Major barriers for implementation of CE are quality issues in recycled materials, supply chain complexities, coordination problems between companies, design and production of the product, disassembly of products and high start-up/ investment costs.

The region of Central Macedonia has taken several actions in order to follow the transition towards the circular economy. The core activity was the development of the “Regional CE Action Plan”.

The central objective of the Action Plan is to influence the available policy tools towards circular economy, with special focus on the Regional Operational Programme (ROP) of Central Macedonia. This will be supported by actions that will increase the awareness of potential SMEs beneficiaries, in order to include the beneficiaries/SMEs in actions funded by the ROP. The overall goal is 80 SMEs in the Region to improve their resource efficiency through circular economy actions.

The Action Plan for the promotion of circular economy in the Region of Central Macedonia consists of three (3) main axes:

1. "Specialization" of the RIS3 Strategy

The Region of Central Macedonia seeks to influence the Strategy's specialization with actions in the field of circular economy. Indicative relevant actions are included in the Plan, concerning ‘champions’ and ‘horizontal support’ sectors, as identified in RIS3.

2. Incorporation of circular economy actions into the ROP of Central Macedonia 2014-2020 The Region will seek to incorporate actions in the ROP 2014-2020, through which the Region's SMEs can be funded in order to move towards a more circular economy. "Circularity" is intended to be seen primarily as a key factor for improving competitiveness and secondarily as a factor for reducing the environmental impact of the SME.

A cross-cutting initiative is the establishment of the One Stop Liaison Office. This constitutes a “web” between academic society, research institutions and businesses targeting to facilitate the flow of knowledge and expertise as well as the exchange of practices and experience.

## The key speakers

Stressed out the importance of taking action in the following:

- Sustainable products should be the rule within the EU
- Empowerment of consumers
- Focus on areas that use most resources and where the possibilities of circularity are continuous
- Waste reduction
- Operate the circularity for people, regions and cities
- Lead the EU of the world efforts for the circular economy



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More specifically, the speakers' addressed to:

- Georgios Stavros Kremlis, Director European Commission, Consultant of Circular Economy

Mr Kremlis informed the audience on the priorities of the European Union on Circular Economy and on the Greek National Action Plan for Circular Economy. He also referred to the circular export standards and to the National climate law that is about to be voted.

- Konstantinos Aravossis, Secretary General of Natural Environment and Water, Ministry of Environment and Energy

Mr Aravossis, referred to the role of the Ministry of Environment and Energy on circular economy transition plan as one of the most important element of the European Green Agreement. This transition concerns a sustainable economic model with great prospects. The General Secretariat of the Ministry of Natural Environment and Energy coordinates all the actions to formulate the new National Action Plan – the road map of Circular Economy which will be in line with the actions of the New Action Plan of the European Union.

- Aristotelis Spiliotis, General Secretary of the Black Sea Trade & Development Bank

Mr Spiliotis mentioned that according to OECD, the circular economy model aims to close the gap between production cycles and natural ecosystems, reduce the carbon footprint, use natural resources rationally and ultimately prevent climate change.

- Georgios Zalidis, Prof. Agriculture AUTH, President of Interbalkan Environment Center

Mr Zalidis pointed out that circular economy is now a key priority in National, EU and international level and a main axis for future grants in all sectors. The philosophy of the world economy, which traditionally been based on the linear model “produce-consume-discard”, now seems to reach to an end point. Circular economy will significantly contribute to the reduction of carbon footprint through the certification of the respective products.

- Konstantinos Michailidis, Deputy Head of Independent Directorate of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Support of the Region of Central Macedonia.

Mr Michailidis, from the prefecture of Central Macedonia, showed that through the One Stop Liaison Office, circular economy has been identified as a sector of the Regional Smart Specialization Strategy for the period 2021-2027. He also mentioned that through targeted workshops of business discovery, the appropriate business financing tools for the adoption of circular economy practices will emerge.

- Christos Vlachokostas, Prof. Dept of Mechanical Engineers, AUTH.

Mr Vlachokostas said that the alternative model at a global level, which can make the existing traditional model of the linear economy outdated and practically useless, is the model of the circular economy. On this basis, a great challenge, but also an insurmountable need for our country, is the transition from the traditional economic

model to a new “smart” economic model with the design and creation of circular economy chains.

- Dimitrios Chomatidis, member of the working group of the Green Fund LIFE-IP CEI-Greece

Mr Chomatidis expressed the view that the circular economy is an integrated approach to the management of energy and planet resources and has a form of a functional and sustainable economic model. As such, it ensures the development and economic viability of human activities, as it acts almost horizontally in a variety of professional sectors, with a simultaneous abundance of possible actions and interventions.

- Nikolaos Petropoulos, President of ERFC, Climate-KIC founder, GREENLAND partner.

Mr Petropoulos referred to the role of the EFRC and stressed out the fact that the ERFC is a founding member of the Climate-KIC node in Greece; mostly towards the implementation of the European Action Plan for the Green and Circular Economy. ERFC, will be the key link between the new EGTC GREENLAND partners in the Mediterranean basin and an ecosystem to boost employment and entrepreneurship for the transition to a circular economy.

- Simos Diamantidis, President & CEO DIOPAS SA, Financial Supervisor at SEVE – Greek Exporters’ Association

Diopas SA handles the reprocessing of nets abandoned by fishermen throughout Greece, turning them into nets for tennis or volley ball courts. It is also producing threads for socks, bathing suits, and carpets.

As he explained, the 100-staff company based in the region of Thessaloniki, is collaborating with the international "Health Seas" company, which collects nets. “We receive the nets, load them onto trucks, send them abroad for recycling – given the fact that this cannot be done in Greece yet [...] – and they come back to us in granulated form.

- Michael Geranis, President of FODSA - Nationwide Regional Waste Management Agency

The specific program implemented by SEVE fits perfectly with the new vision of FODSA. Central Macedonia, which aims to implement the "reduction-reuse-recycling" model and its belief is that Central Macedonia Prefecture is the compass of waste management and transition to the cyclical model of economy not only for the country but also for Southeastern Europe. The shift to the cyclical model of the economy will contribute to the greatest extent to the national and consequently to the European effort to achieve the goal of climate neutrality.

This shift can only be won if it is linked to an attractive vision for a change of culture and culture in waste management, which will be achieved by establishing an extroverted orientation to serve the citizen with an emphasis on quality, efficiency, effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of actions.

- Professor Maria Boile, Department of Maritime Studies, University of Piraeus

The emphasis of the EU on the "blue" economy, which has a turnover of 650 billion euros (2018 figures), produces a gross added value of 176 billion and employs 4.5 million people, said the professor of the Department of Maritime Studies at the University of Piraeus, Maria Boile, director of research at CERTH / HIT. She conveyed





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the information that the Commission aims at integrating maritime policy into Europe's new economic policy. This is in order to ensure the participation of the Blue Economy in the European Green Agreement (EGD) with an emphasis on five areas: green shipping, development and operation of green ports (with actions such as ship recycling, hazardous materials management, marine noise pollution reduction), inland green supply chain, circular economy and knowledge exchange.

- Michael Tokas, Environmental Protection Engineer, TITAN SA Thessaloniki

"The 'business as usual' is over," said Michalis Tokas, an environmental protection engineer at the TITAN cement plant in Thessaloniki, stressing the need for the industry to contribute internationally to the fight against the climate crisis and carbon neutrality. He announced that the factory in Thessaloniki alone consumed in 2020 more than 30,000 tons of industrial by-products as alternative raw materials and more than 25,000 tons as alternative fuels.

- Anna Michou, Head of the Technical Chamber of Greece's permanent environmental committee for Central Macedonia,

Mrs Michou said that dumped construction waste in Greece amounts to nearly 50 million tons so far, according to estimates, most of which can be salvaged and recycled. A significant volume of the material had accumulated around urban regions, but also within protected areas like the Delta of Axios River. But Greece is behind in recycling construction material, compared to the European average, where it is over 90%. "While the goal for the EU until 2020 was to recycle 70% of waste from excavations, construction, and razing of buildings per year, the average EU rate is now much higher than that. But in Greece, as in the majority of Black Sea and SE European countries, this rate is under 40%, including the recovery and reuse of excavated earth. Therefore, as countries of the Black Sea, SE Europe and Greece, we are far from the target set for 2020," she noted.

- Dr Eri Toka, Professor at the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Head of the Office of Technology Transfer of AUTH-Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Mrs Toka talked about the importance of research work, carried out at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH), with a significant contribution from the private sector, which contributes 30.7% of research project funding for the period 2016-2020. Although we are very high as a country and AUTH in the world rankings in terms of the level of research produced and in the circular economy, our performance (as a country) is very low in exports of medium and high technology products, industrial design applications, business employment with high growth rates, expenditures for research in the private sector, etc. The State, recognizes that technology transfer is a means to change this picture and has been high on strategic priorities.

### **The conclusions of the meetings are:**

- In a rapidly changing world, "business as usual" cannot be an option  
WHAT WE SHOULD DO: The 5 Re-
  - ✓ Reduce - Refuse
  - ✓ Repair
  - ✓ Reuse
  - ✓ Repurpose
  - ✓ Recycle

Measures for the Climatic Change must be taken asap



- Lack of resources and raw materials will soon be faced, therefore circularity is vital
- Environmental protection must be the first thing for individuals and companies worldwide.

The circular economy, as a concept, includes the most efficient use of resources throughout their life cycle, closing, expanding and reducing the material cycles that could lead to the decoupling of raw material consumption from economic development. The transition to a circular economy implies approaches that can lead to lower rates of extraction and utilization of natural resources. This in turn leads to improved resource efficiency and the promotion of sustainable materials management.

Expected benefits from the transition to a circular economy include:

- reduced extraction of virgin natural resources
- reduced exposure to (geopolitical) supply risk
- reduced environmental pressures
- new economic and employment opportunities
- synergies with the transition to a low carbon economy.

The transition to a circular economy involves the use of the economy's resources through a series of channels, such as:

1. closure of material circles, through:
  - repair, reuse, reconstruction of products at the end of their life cycle
  - recycling of materials and waste after consumption in secondary raw materials
  - service systems for products
2. expansion of material cycles through ecological design
3. Limiting materials through resource efficiency initiatives.

The focus of current policy frameworks is to achieve material cyclicity at home.

### **Furthermore, recommendations have been made as to:**

The transition to the 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 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 maximizing their utilization capacity and extending their useful life, thus maintaining their value for as long as possible. This is made possible only by changing the culture of the society.

Like with any systemic change, the transition to the circular economy requires several elements of the system to change simultaneously. The inertia and resistance of the current linear economic systems prevent the transition from occurring. Concerted actions by a host of stakeholders are needed. Government at all levels, businesses, innovators, academia, investors and consumers all have to play their distinct roles and contribute to the process.

In order for the circular economy implementation to succeed you need to make sure that:

- The people are ready to accept the change
- The government regulations are ready to monitor the change
- The waste treatment facility is ready to support the change



- The waste recycling facility is ready to execute the change
- The business model is ready to maintain the change sustainably

The Strategy of Circular Economy needs to be incorporated into Governmental planning and Ministerial sectorial policies, into the National Developmental Strategy 2021-27 and its corresponding specific issues, the financial and developmental tools and to mark the overall governmental developmental policy. Successful transition to circular economy requires parallel implementation of actions at all stages of the value chain: In mining raw materials and the design of products and materials (PRODUCTION), movement and consumption of goods, repair, reuse or reconstruction through informing the public, research and innovation (CONSUMPTION) and putting materials and water into new usage (SECONDARY RAW MATERIALS). The holistic approach to the issue of circular economy also requires ways of more collective operation of basic agencies (Administration, Market, Media, Society, Local Authorities, Citizens), as well as improved coordination of Administration (Government, Ministries, Organisations, Agencies)

No government is capable of carrying out the transition on its own. Cities and businesses play a crucial role in the transition: they are increasingly recognized as the central generators of circular change.