

FRANS TIMMERMANS
First Vice-President

Brussels, 27. 01. 2016
Ares (2015) 5355195

Dear Ms Harms, Dear Mr Lamberts,

Thank you for your letter of 24 November 2015 to President Juncker on the Circular Economy Package.

The Commission considers that the Package adopted on 2 December 2015 is ambitious in a number of respects. As you mention in your letter, it is more comprehensive and covers the full cycle of a product: from design and production to consumption, waste management and markets for secondary raw materials. The Package also addresses a number of sectorial initiatives and is action-oriented. We focus primarily on concrete, pragmatic actions to be put in place during this Commission's term of office. It will now be important to ensure its full implementation.

As regards waste management, our proposals to increase recycling and to phase out landfilling remain ambitious. At the same time they take into account the situation of individual Member States in particular those with low current recycling rates. Moreover, the proposals contain a review clause according to which the Commission will re-assess the 2030 targets by 2025 with the view to increasing them.

The EU has committed to ambitious goals on food waste and marine litter in the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Circular Economy package recognises these targets, reaffirms the EU target to reduce marine litter by 30% by 2020 and sets a clear course of action to meet both our food waste and marine litter objectives. It is estimated that implementing fully the waste legislation will reduce marine litter by 25% in the EU.

Whether one headline target would be sufficient to measure resource efficiency in a way that captures the economic dynamics and overall impact is debatable. In any case, the Commission attaches the utmost importance to monitoring the transition to the circular economy and we have therefore included the development of a monitoring framework in the action plan.

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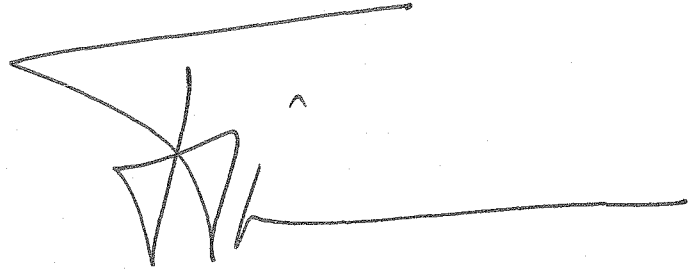
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We can assure you that resource efficiency remains integrated in the European Semester process. The Annual Growth Strategy which sets the priorities for the Semester, states under the priorities for 2016 that "Member State action is necessary to improve efficiency in the use of resources and bringing forward a much more circular economy".

The Communication on Waste to Energy, expected for the end of 2016, will take close account of the EU waste hierarchy according to which as a general rule waste prevention, re-use and recycling are preferred over energy recovery and, as the least preferred option, waste disposal. In relation to the treatment of non-recyclable waste, the Communication will address, inter alia, the efficiency in extracting more energy and materials from waste through thermal processes.

I would like to thank you for your interest in our work in the circular economy and welcome your support in taking it forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'F' and 'T' followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Frans TIMMERMANS