

Intervention of the Italian Ambassador in Slovenia, Paolo Trichilo
Walking the talk: Enabling Circular Transformation
Maribor, 12 May 2017

More than forty years ago, the Club of Rome drew the global attention to the issue of economic and population growth within the framework of limited supply of world resources and circular economy is one of the main responses to the need to cope with such a question. Transition to circular economy needs a clear choice and a strong commitment towards a common goal. It needs also shared targets, specific measures, monitoring and fine-tuning tools.

We are not simply looking at waste recycling but rather at an integrated approach affecting the entire value chain and engaging all relevant players: from extraction of raw materials to design of final products, from distribution to consumption, revamping and reuse. An evolution beyond linear economy can be conceived only and if the new model will be able to produce a positive impact on competitiveness, growth and employment. In this framework, I welcome the EU Circular Economy Package, with its legislative measures and action plan.

Italy, with its manufacturing vocation and scarcity of raw materials, developed a strong experience in industrial recycling. This was made possible also thanks to an important reform entered into force 20 years ago.

- Today, Italy is at the top places in Europe for diversified and consolidated practices in circular economy: we reduced the disposal of waste through landfill by nearly two-thirds, from 21,3 million tonnes in 1997 (80%) to only 7,8 million tonnes in 2017 (26%). Not only, in these 20 years we increased the separate collection of urban waste from 9% to 47,6%, with impressive results achieved in packaging waste, the recycling of which rose from 33 to 78,5% already in 2015.
- It is worthwhile to remind that Italy holds 12% of the total number of green patents developed in Europe related to the waste sector (second only to Germany).
- In economic terms, our green revolution brought growth for companies, employment and turnover. From 2008 up to now the number of economic operators engaged in waste recycling increased by 10% to 6.000 units, employing 155,000 workers (+ 13% compared to 2008) for a total turnover of more than 50 billion euros.
- At present our recycled waste is not enough to feed the sector. This is why we can boast a leadership in Europe with 5,9 millions tons of waste imported for reuse. The latest available data on the evolution of secondary raw materials production through waste recycling technologies in Italy show that in 2015 we recorded a 5% increase in the recovery of paper,

glass, plastic, wood, aluminium and steel packaging materials and a 67% share of input in consumption.

- Within the new strategic framework, we are now engaged in increasing our capacity to dispose of our own non-recyclable waste. The Italian biogas sector in agriculture annually transforms 20 million tonnes of animal by-products and waste into renewable electricity, covering the needs of 6 million people. As a whole, the sector, which has more than 1500 plants on the national territory, produces 9.37 TWh of electricity each year. Plans are underway to boost a potential of about 8.5 billion cubic meters by 2030, a figure that corresponds to 15% of the annual Italian natural gas demand.

I believe that ever better results can be achieved through adequate and inclusive supporting instruments developed and implemented at national and European level in coming years. Co-operation on the ground is important and this is why we are supporting, in the framework of the programme Interreg Italia-Slovenia project dedicated to circular change in specific sectors such as plastic, milk and dairy chain, training and tourism that hopefully will be positively evaluated.

I am proud that some of our best practices there have been presented yesterday in Ljubljana and will be presented today in Maribor:

One of them is well known in Slovenia, I am talking about **Aquafil**, a world leading manufacturer of Nylon 6, with a presence in eight countries on three continents with 16 plants employing more than 2,700 people.

Favini is another worldwide leader in the design and production of textures and finishing solutions for eco-leather and paper for fashion, luxury, design, IT and technical sportswear and stationery.

Intesa Sanpaolo is the first international financing operator to become global partner of Ellen MacArthur Foundation, with the aim of involving potential investors on circular economy projects.

I am also pleased about the media partnership established by the organiser Giacomelli media with **Materia Rinnovabile-renewable matter**, an international magazine on bio and circular economy.

Finally, **Enjoy Italy** provided a demonstration of excellence and sustainability in agri-food through the catering served at Ljubljana Castle.