

The European Union is ready to finance Croatia's move towards a circular economy. The 5th edition of the Croatia Waste Expo, a traditional venue for meeting and exchanging ideas among stakeholders in the environmental sector, took place in Zagreb. The most important topic this year was the demand of the European Union that member states have to undertake a transition to the circular economy, where the waste of one industry becomes the raw material for the other. At this moment, Croatia has available 475 million euros from the Competitiveness and Cohesion Operational Programme, and the prerequisite for the use of this money was the adoption of the Waste management Plan for the period 2017 to 2022, which was finally accomplished in January this year. This was pointed out in the introductory remarks by the editor-in-chief of Poslovni Dnevnik, the media outlet which launched the Croatia Waste Expo, Vladimir Nišević. "When we first organised this event five years ago, we tried to point out the importance of the environmental sector, and today's anniversary and the full hall mean that we have succeeded in our goal. The message we want to send today is that Croatia has the knowledge, the will and the technology needed to achieve the set environmental goals. It is crucial to consolidate and make good use of the opportunities ahead of us," said Nišević. The view that the issue of waste management was a critical topic was supported by Mile Horvat, the State Secretary at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy. "By adopting the waste management plan, we are one step closer to reducing and preventing waste generation, which are the common goals set by the European Union. The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy is continually working on drafting public calls for co-financing projects from the waste management segment and enables the realisation of numerous other activities. The Croatia Waste Expo is a great opportunity to exchange ideas and practices," added Horvat. Croatia's Member of European Parliament Davor Škrlec gave a presentation on the circular economy, in which he stressed that Croatia should start using the money at its disposal as soon as possible. "We have to fight the climate change which can no longer be ignored. The change is happening, affecting entire regions and continents and we have to adapt to the new circumstances and begin more intensive efforts to reduce our negative impact," warned Škrlec. He also said that the process should insist on innovations and regular investments, including the promotion of technical changes which will extend the usage period of products, and social innovation such as investing in consumer education and encouraging the development of sharing economy. "The key positions of the European Parliament in this area are the compulsory separate

collection of bio-waste ,the reduction of food waste,the maximum disposal of five percent of municipal waste ,the ban on mixing hazardous waste and the gradual elimination of particularly worrying substances," stressed Škrlec, pointing out that the circular economy could be the driver of the economic development and new employment.

Currently underway are the call for the construction of recycling yards, worth 144.5 million kunas, and the call for remediation of landfills of non-hazardous waste, worth 80 million kunas.

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