## Introduction

A **circular economy (CE)** is based on the principles of designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use, and regenerating natural systems[[1]](#footnote-2). The **EU’s Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP)**, launched in 2020, aims to facilitate the EU’s transition to a circular economy by establishing a new, regenerative growth model that gives back to the planet more than it takes, maintaining resource consumption within planetary boundaries, and minimising waste and pollution[[2]](#footnote-3). Europe’s circular economy ambition provides a policy framework that aims to transform environmental policy in a comprehensive and systemic manner, in line with CE principles.

In this context, the **role of consumers** in enabling the transition has become more prominent. Consumer choices and feedback have the potential to affect decisions both upstream (e.g., in terms of material use or product design) and downstream (e.g., in terms of recycling or re-use).

The table below summarises the intervention points in the lifecycle of the product where the consumer behaviour has a prominent role.

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| **Consumer choices during three different product life cycle phases** |
| Upon purchase:* Rent a product rather than purchasing it for a short period of use;
* Purchase second-hand products;
* Purchase re-manufactured products or products including re-used components;
* Purchase products using recycled materials;
* Consider the environmental impact of products, via relevant, trustworthy and comparable information such as labels;
* Follow an economic incentive (such as tax breaks) to purchase products that are more sustainable;

During the use phase:* Follow the user instructions (maintenance) to increase the lifetime and/or to reduce the energy consumption of the product (or the use of other resources);
* Perform regular maintenance operations on the product (or have them performed by a professional);
* Repair the product when out of service (or have it repaired by a professional);
* Upgrade the product when new technological developments arise;

When the product is not needed any longer:* Sell or donate the product as second-hand item (on-line or off-line);
* Bring the product to a dedicated waste collection point, so that it can be managed to maintain its value (re-use, re-manufacture, high-quality recycling).
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Consumption is strongly influenced by and embedded in certain prevailing systems, i.e., infrastructure, product availability, product information, economic incentives, societal norms and habits, and consumer perceptions and values. However, research on this topic is growing and more can be learned on consumer behaviour in relation to CE practices.

The EU CEAP foresees a number of EU-wide initiatives to empower consumers to fully exploit their enabling potential, however, we are interested in learning more about **innovative** **public policies** (i.e., including policies beyond labelling) that can stimulate circular behaviour at national or sub-national levels.

This survey has been designed to collect evidence for an EEA study on the role of consumers in the CE and how public policies can stimulate circular behaviour. We invite you to please share your views on this topic, regardless of your level of expertise.

Please note that your responses will be handled with confidentiality, and in line with the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules[[3]](#footnote-4). The individual responses to the survey **will be used internally by the project team**, and will not be published. We will publish a summary of the findings in the report, which will consider the aggregated responses.

On behalf of the project team, we thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey!

## Section I: Public policies aimed at stimulating circular behaviour

Q2.1. Thinking about **public policies** that aim to stimulate circular behaviour **in general**, what are some examples of public policies in your country? Please provide examples in the table below (including name, reference, and link to the policy measure, as applicable). Do you have any supporting evidence to accompany the policy measure(s) you cited above (e.g., studies, evaluations, impact assessments, brochures)?

Consider the categories listed below, or provide additional examples (not falling into any of the existing categories) in the “Other” category. If you think of relevant examples in other countries (worldwide), please include these examples as well (specifying the country). **You can share supporting evidence in any EEA language** but if English versions/summaries are available, we would be grateful to receive them.

We are primarily interested in policies implemented at **national** level, but if you are aware of **regional** examples that have a potential for replication, please share those with us too.

You are welcome to fill in many examples in each cell of the table below, using bullet points. These examples might, for instance, be addressing behaviours related to different products, such as clothing or electronics.

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| Type of public policy | Public policy (name, reference, link to official text) | Supporting evidence (please include link or reference details), if applicable, and description of the public policy in relation to the circular economy |
| Labelling initiatives or indices |  |  |
| Economic incentives such as subsidies aimed at promoting circular behaviour (including performance-based incentives) |  |  |
| Taxation of e.g., products or behaviours that do not align with circular economy principles |  |  |
| Education, training, and skills development (targeted at e.g., students, design or repair professionals, general population) |  |  |
| Information- or awareness-raising initiatives (including provision of feedback and reminders) |  |  |
| Investments in supporting infrastructure or its accessibility |  |  |
| Policies using social modelling or norm appeals (i.e., stimulating behaviour through community interaction, ‘role models’, or expectations of what the ‘social norm’ or the ‘acceptable group behaviour’ should be) |  |  |
| Legal targets, standards, or restrictions |  |  |
| Nudges[[4]](#footnote-5) (e.g., adjusting default settings) |  |  |

Q2.2 Some consumer features (e.g., traits, defining characteristics) or external factors of the consumers’ environment (e.g. availability of repair infrastructure) can affect the **adoption of circular behaviour** (some examples are listed in the table below). It is thus possible that some public policies aim at modifying these features, with the purpose of increasing the adoption by consumers of circular behaviour. Please indicate whether you are aware of any **public policies** targeting **specific aspects that determine consumer behaviour**, such as the examples listed below.

For each item where you identify a relevant public policy, please specify the name of the policy (including a reference and link, where possible) and describe its working mechanisms in relation to the circular economy. **You can share supporting evidence in any EEA language** but if English versions/summaries are available, we would be grateful to receive them.

| Features/factors affecting the adoption of circular behaviour | Public policy (name, reference, link to official text) | Supporting evidence (please include link or reference details), if applicable, and description of the policy and of its relation to the adoption of circular behaviours by the consumers bearing these features  |
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| Awareness of environmental problems |
| Knowledge about the environmental benefits of circular behaviour | *(e.g., awareness-raising campaigns on waste sorting or material footprints)* |  |
| Knowledge about circularity |
| Understanding of what makes products ‘circular’ (e.g., repairability, recycled content) | *(e.g., classes within the school curriculum on circularity)* |  |
| Knowledge or information about product maintenance | *(e.g., guidelines or standards informing consumers about product-specific maintenance)* |  |
| Knowledge or information about circular action at the end of a product’s life | *(e.g., information on end-of-life treatment or disposal options, including location of recycling/collection facilities and/or repair shops)* |  |
| Knowledge and understanding of the economic savings associated with circular behaviour | *(e.g., information on the savings associated with repair vs purchase)* |  |
| *Other (please specify)* |  |  |
| Socio-economic factors |
| Level of income | *(e.g., targeted subsidies for the purchase of longer-life products by lower-income households, low-interest loans to households purchasing longer-life products)* |  |
| Security of income | *(e.g., low-interest loans to companies renting longer-life products)* |  |
| *Other (please specify)* |  |  |
| Psychological factors |
| Long-term vision (i.e., intertemporal trade-offs) | *(e.g., government communications making future risks (costs) more apparent)* |  |
| Habits or lifestyle | *(e.g., bonus-malus systems encouraging product reuse)* |  |
| Personal values (e.g., altruistic values, caring for the environment) | *(e.g., school trips to recycling plants)* |  |
| Social influence or community values | *(e.g., neighbourhood ‘squads’ ensuring communal recycling and information sharing)* |  |
| *Other (please specify)* |  |  |
| External factors (i.e., factors in one’s environment) |
| Availability of supporting infrastructure (e.g., repair/maintenance shops, separate waste collection infrastructure)  | *(e.g., promoting repair cafes)* |  |
| Proximity (or ease-of-access) to supporting infrastructure (e.g., repair/maintenance shops, waste separation infrastructure) | *(e.g., incentives to attract repair shops within a certain radius of every home)* |  |
| Availability of circular products  | *(e.g., targets for market uptake of circular products)* |  |
| *Other (please specify)* |  |  |
| Other factors or features |
| *Other (please specify)* |  |  |

Q2.2.2. Thinking of the above factors and consumer features, are there any other ‘consumer segments’ that public policies in your country have targeted, with the aim to increase the uptake of circular practices? If yes, please describe them in the textbox below.

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## Section II: Final remarks

Q3.1. Do you wish to add any **further reflections** that may be relevant to this study?

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Q3.2. Do you wish to share any relevant document(s) (e.g., studies, reports, policy documents) that could be useful to this study? Please add links or references in the textbox below, or send your document(s) as an attachment to your response (describing the relevance of the document(s) in the textbox below). **You can share supporting evidence in** **any EEA language** but if English versions/summaries are available, we would be grateful to receive them.

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1. <https://www.ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/circular-economy/what-is-the-circular-economy> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/pdf/new_circular_economy_action_plan.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection_en> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. According to Thaler and Sunstein (2008), nudges are defined as aspects or alterations of the choice architecture that influences people’s behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. Thaler and Sunstein (2008) specify, “Putting the fruit at eye level counts as a nudge. Banning junk food does not.” (p.6 of *Nudge*). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)