

Speech draft for Annamária Galambos, Head of Department
Multi-Country Workshop on Preparing a Circular Economy Action Plan

17. May 2018. Ministry of Agriculture



Dear participants, Ladies and Gentlemen!

On our planet every human gets 1,8 hectares of terrestrial land, but in Hungary the average ecological footprint is 3,7 hectares. It means that we use double area than available. Hungary is not special in that, but it is hardly tranquillizing. Based on the European Union average (2014) we would need 2,6 planets. Within the EU Belgium has the biggest ecological footprint, needing 4,3 planets, while Romania seems to be the most sustainable, needing “only” 1,4 planets.

While notable part of our footprint comes from food production, in the same time resource exploitation and procession, transportation, waste management and landfill also notably contribute to our environmental load. Our consumption also gives environmental load in the format of landfills, and unfortunately also as plastic waste in freshwater and marines. Is it all right? Can it be changed? And if yes, how? We aim to find answers in this two days Workshop.

Our world is changing. As climate is also changing, new kind of crops appear in the gardens and also on our plate. We ourselves also do change; we have new habits, needs and expectations: we want new products in the shops.

When we make our decisions among products, how much do we consider the future of the packing? At all, is the future of the packing signed on the sour-cream? And if yes, do we know those signs?

Do we read where the product has been transported from? Do we know if we could have a similar one from the vicinity? Not even mentioning fair-trade... We would like to decrease environmental loads and their negative social impacts. We believe that by cooperation like this workshop we can make steps towards a circular and more liveable future.

It is our special joy to welcome you here at the workshop on circular economy. It is a joy – for several reasons.

Joy, because it is our common goal to

- Convert to sustainable economy,
- Decrease raw material and energy need,
- Minimize the amount of waste,
- Transform the linear material streams to circular processes by closing the loops.

Joy, because here we can learn from experts who are far in advance of us.

Our close neighbours, Slovenia published on the 11th of May its Roadmap of Circular Economy. It is great to see how strong they are in commitment.

In The Netherlands ministries responsible for economy, environment, foreign affairs and infrastructure worked together and published in September 2016 the document titled “A Circular Economy in the Netherlands by 2050”.

Finland has been the very first to elaborate their roadmap with the title “Leading the cycle – Finnish road map to a circular economy 2016-2025” that includes the necessary steps for a sustainable success.

It is a **joy** that during this workshop we not only can learn success stories but also possible difficulties and traps. If you like: we are among colleagues, so now we truly can speak about challenges – which anyway could be very similar.

And it is a **joy** that we can learn together with those who are similar to us. Our history, structure of our economy, our way of thinking are all similar, so we can suppose to find similar answers and solutions too.

Issues of circular economy are often rather complex: structure of economy, employment, land use and energy policy all have to be taken into account.

The issue is very current.

European Union introduced its package on circular economy in 2015 and 2018, which defines goals for its member states – not in the very short term but in the longer term surely.

It is current, because presently our proposal for the preparation of national circular economy action plan is being evaluated. When we will gain our mandate and will start the work it will be helpful to utilize the lessons of this workshop.

And it is current as OECD will introduce its latest Environment Performance Review on Hungary in 28th of June , which also highlights waste management, especially the efforts for closing the material stream loops.

We want to express our special thanks to Mr Andreas Versmann from DG Environment, who greatly supported the idea of organizing this workshop.

We warmly greet the presenter experts: Ms Tjitske Ijpma from The Netherlands, Ms Janja Kreitmayer McKenzie from Slovenia, and Mr Jarmo Muurman from Finland. Our acknowledgement to them for their efforts in this field that is not obligatory yet but is kept in priorities also during the Bulgarian presidency.

I also greet Polish, Slovakian and Czech participants, who also seek for a “circularer” economy and thus for a higher level of environmental protection. I thank the participation of all Hungarian colleagues, who are committed for intergovernmental cooperation.

I think that this two days workshop offers great opportunity for discussing the challenges and difficulties, and assessing possibilities. For gaining the most of it I encourage all of you to honestly share experiences, opinions, doubts and ask as many questions as possible.

I thank you for your active participation!