Measuring the IMPACTS of the transition to the CIRCULAR economy [1]

The overall objective of the CIRCULAR IMPACTS project was to develop an assessment based on data and indicators of the macro-economic, societal and environmental impacts of a successful transition to a circular economy. The assessment aimed to support the European Commission in its discussions with the Member States on progress in the circular economy transition and the implications for the EU economy especially in the context of the European Semester.

Over the course of 24 months (running from October 2016 to September 2018), the project team:

- Collected an evidence base of reliable datasets and projections and made the evidence base available for the development of impact assessments;
- Pointed out innovative approaches based on the circular-economy concept in Member States;
- Assessed the economic, societal and resource-efficiency impacts of selected transitions on existing or new markets over time;
- Compiled model-based estimates and assessments of macroeconomic, societal and environmental costs and benefits of circular-economy transitions; and
- Described market and societal impacts of resource and waste flows and changes to those flows

The project CIRCULAR IMPACTS strengthened the theoretical, evidentiary and policy basis for circular-economy transitions via:

- Developing a theoretical structure of the circular economy to understand the evidence base needed for impact assessments of circular-economy initiatives and the type of information needed to improve the European Semester’s evidence base in areas related to the circular economy;
- Collecting and unifying current collections of evidence useful for this purpose, making this evidence available to stakeholders seeking to develop impact assessments in the context of the circular economy;
- Conducting case studies in different Member States and different sectors of the circular economy to understand good practices and the impacts of different circular-economy processes in comparison to the processes they are replacing;
- Using interactive stakeholder engagement in the case studies to understand the impact of the transition on different sectors and stakeholders and the conditions and limits of the transition;
- Using the project’s evidence base and the evidence from case studies to estimate impacts in the short, medium and long-term; and
- Developing scenarios for mainstreaming and estimating the impacts of mainstreaming.

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