

E U R O P E A N E C O N O M I C A R E A
FORUM OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

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TENTH MEETING OF THE EEA EFTA FORUM

Brussels
24-25 November 2014

Opinion on the Green Employment Initiative and the circular economy

Rapporteur: S. Björn Blöndal

The EEA EFTA Forum of Local and Regional Authorities:

- A. Having regard to Annex XX of the EEA Agreement on Environment and Annex IV of the EEA Agreement on Energy;
- B. Having regard to the European Commission's Communication: EUROPE 2020 A Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth COM/2010/2020;
- C. Having regard to the European Commission's Communication: Towards a circular economy: A zero waste programme for Europe COM/2014/0398;
- D. Having regard to European Commission's Communication: Green Employment Initiative: Tapping into the job creation potential of the green economy COM/2014/446;
- E. Noting the reinforced subsidiarity principle set out in the Lisbon Treaty and its explicit reference to the local and regional dimension and self-government;
- F. Noting the proportionality principle as laid down in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
- G. Emphasizing the key role played by local and regional authorities in the implementation of European policy and legislation;
- H. Acknowledging the impact of European Union law and policy on local and regional authorities in the EEA EFTA States through the EEA Agreement;
- I. Noting the role of the Forum as a body in the EFTA structure:
 1. Welcomes European Union initiatives on the circular economy and the job creation potential of the green economy;
 2. Underlines that green jobs and the circular economy can be promoted by municipalities and regions, for example in their capacity as planning and community development authorities, through developing more efficient and greener transport

systems, by providing the right kind of education and training, by local investment in sustainable energy production and distribution, and greening of services in fields such as water supply, sewage, waste management, reduction of food waste and through 'green' procurement;

3. Stresses the importance of a clear definition of "green jobs". Common European indicators are needed to measure the environmental impact of a given job or economic activity. This would allow national, regional and local authorities to set targets, in order to measure progress and learn from each other. Regions and municipalities could thus develop and adapt strategies tailored to their specific requirements and goals;
4. Emphasizes that municipalities and regions, being the authorities closest to the inhabitants, have an important role to play in raising awareness among the general public of the benefits of the circular economy and in laying the foundations for greener behaviour of the younger generations through their school systems;
5. Stresses the importance of coordinating the actions of authorities at national, regional and local level to successfully create sustainable, green jobs; also, schools, vocational colleges, stimulation for entrepreneurship and local partnerships between public authorities and local businesses all need to be geared towards the green economy;
6. Stresses the importance of stronger cooperation between local and regional authorities and universities and higher education institutions in order to better match the competences needed at the local and regional level for greening of jobs;
7. Underlines the role of local and regional authorities as employers and the challenge to recruit and retain qualified employees which can be met by developing skills for green jobs through e.g. apprenticeships and vocational training;
8. emphasizes that municipalities and regions face specific challenges and opportunities in relation to the green economy as their circumstances vary greatly with regards to labour supply, natural resources, economic activity and infrastructure. This diversity needs to be drawn upon and exchange of best practices and experiences of the green economy promoted;
9. emphasizes that local and regional authorities play an important role in fostering innovation, which forms the basis for green jobs; both through support for local development and through promoting the green economy with their purchasing power;
10. underlines the role of local and regional authorities as public procurers and the option to use environmental and social considerations in public procurement in order to underpin green jobs and the circular economy; calls for continued support at EU and national level for green job creation at local and regional level, be it through financial support and/or support for capacity building and exchange of good practices;
11. asks the EFTA Ministers to take into account the opinion of the Forum in discussions on the green employment and the circular economy.