

Circular economy

■ A definition

Circular economy is a model of production and consumption based on **repairing, re-using and recycling** products, extending their life cycle and making them more sustainable.

This economic model opposes the traditional one, called linear, where **goods** are consumed and thrown away. Part of the linear model is *planned obsolescence*, i.e. the **policy** of designing a product, usually an electronic device or household appliance, to function for a relatively short period, in order to be substituted by a new one when it stops working.

The circular economy model has several advantages:

- it helps preserve the environment;
- it reduces the need for **raw** materials;
- it creates new kinds of jobs and helps people save money.

■ How can circular economy help preserve the environment?

- Reusing and recycling products limit the use of natural resources.
- Recycling, upgrading, and repairing goods reduce the amount of waste and limit excessive packaging.
- The reduction of goods production and waste decreases greenhouse gas emissions due to production processes and waste **removal**.

■ Benefits of reducing the need for raw materials

As the demand for raw materials increases, their supply becomes more and more limited. This means that some countries are dependent on others for their raw materials. Recycling reduces this dependency, together with some inconveniences such as price increase and materials availability.

■ Innovation and money saving

Re-thinking materials and products for a circular use can **boost** innovation in design and production in different fields. This increases competitiveness and creates new jobs.

On the other hand, consumers have more **long-lasting**, quality products which make them save money in the long term and increase the quality of their lives.



■ The role of the EU

Since 2020, when the European Commission presented the **Circular Economy Action Plan**, a number of actions have been taken to promote this economic model. Between 2021 and 2022, measures for promoting sustainable products and reducing packaging have been proposed and discussed. The aim of the European Union is to come to a fully circular economy by 2050, with a set of stricter rules about recycling and materials use and consumption to be made.



to boost: *potenziare*

goods: *beni*

long-lasting: *di lunga durata*

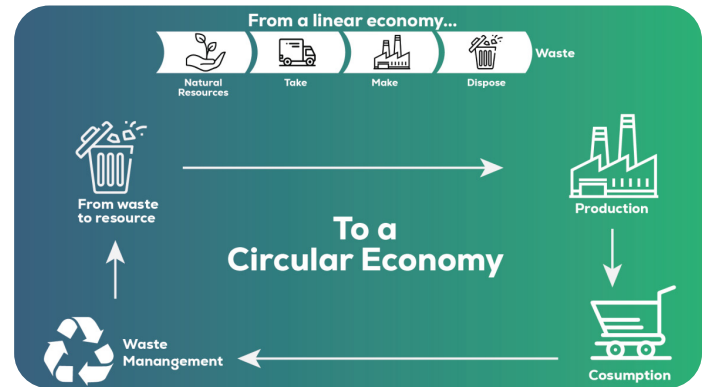
policy: *politica*

raw: *grezzo*

removal: *rimozione*

1 Match the words in column A to their synonyms in column B.

- | A | | B |
|------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Nature | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. Goods |
| 2. To refurbish | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Raw |
| 3. To strengthen | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Environment |
| 4. Products | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. To repair |
| 5. To fix | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. To renovate |
| 6. Source | <input type="checkbox"/> | f. To boost |
| 7. Unprocessed | <input type="checkbox"/> | g. To upgrade |
| 8. To modernise | <input type="checkbox"/> | h. Supply |



2 Answer the questions.

1. What is the aim of circular economy?
2. In which fields is circular economy most necessary?
3. What is the name of the traditional economic model?
4. Explain the meaning of the expression *planned obsolescence*.
5. What are the benefits of reusing and recycling for the environment?
6. Why is it important to reduce the need for raw materials?
7. How can circular economy be a source of new jobs?
8. What is the deadline for a fully circular economy in Europe?

3 **GROUP WORK** Think of possible ways of applying the principles of circular economy to the following aspects of everyday life and discuss about how to make them more sustainable. Search the Internet if you need further information.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Car travelling | 3. Using household appliances |
| 2. Using electronic devices | 4. Wearing clothes |



THE RIGHT TO REPAIR

In order to promote the green transition and sustainable consumption, according to the objectives of circular economy, in March 2022 the European Commission adopted a proposal on common rules promoting the "right to repair" goods. The proposal had already been announced in two documents: The New Circular Economy Action Plan and The New Consumer Agenda, issued by the European Union at the end of 2020.