

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The circular economy is one of the ways of limiting the negative impact of human activity on the planet. And work is one type of activity through which people not only provide for their life on earth, but also coexist.

« What might work be like, tomorrow, in a more circular economy? » is thus a key question, which involves contemporaneously both a balanced ecology and our individual and social well-being. In addressing this question, the King Baudouin Foundation is pursuing its commitment to sustainability.

Thinking about the future and conducting a strategic exercise requires a special approach. Because we cannot know the future: we have no data from it; moreover, history teaches us that a particular event or something radically new is possible. Nevertheless, even if we cannot know the future, we can imagine it in a plausible manner, one that is coherent with what we know about our past and the present time. This report sets out the results of such an exercise of imagination. Held in 2021, it brought together a "Creative Group" of some thirty people, over a six-day period, and used a specific methodology. The participants all had knowledge of, or experience relating to, the circular economy and/or work and came from a variety of sectors, from construction to recycling, from social start-up to university, as well as credit organisations or government bodies. The list of participants is given in the appendix to the report and the Foundation would like to express its sincere gratitude to them all.

The methodology used was that of following the stages of planning through scenarios. This method has been developed by large companies and formalised within an academic framework and then used for business development, as well as for building peace during political crises. The approach involves exploring future possible

environments. The starting point involves an analysis of the current situation (May 2021), as seen in the 'launch report' which you will find in the first section. Through discussion, the driving forces of the current time are identified. Two of these forces are then selected as being decisive drivers and participants are then asked to discuss what the future might look like in function of the evolution of these two forces.

We imagined that the future of work in a circular economy could in large part depend on the amount of innovation, which is more or less conducive to circularity, as well as the dominant values in society, more or less humanist and of solidarity. From this came four stories, presented in the second part of the report. These form a sort of spiral of progress, starting from a society that is materialistic, individualistic and not very innovative, and moving towards one which is extremely creative and attentive to connections.

The objective of this exercise was to enable everyone to prepare themselves for the future foreseen. We therefore used the four stories to provide perspectives to think about options, risks and opportunities at the present time. We were struck, on the one hand, by the sclerosis and self-centredness present in some worrisome scenarios. On the other hand, the scenario that met with the greatest enthusiasm showed the importance of fluidity, of a broad reasoning that went beyond calculated reasoning, and reliance. At this point the whole of society becomes more circular, not just the economy. The distillation of the four stories can be found in the third part of the report. Now the exercise has been completed, the next stage is to bring it to life in our discussions, to create a dialogue between reality and imagination. Perhaps this is easier than one might imagine, since some elements in the scenarios - both positive and negative - exist today: capsules of the future can be found in the present.

One story has, no doubt, never changed the world, but it could be a point of departure. This is why, today, we should give serious consideration to the scenarios...