1st COBALT EU Civil Society - Industry Dialogue

"Ecodesign and New Business Models for a Circular Economy"

Brussels, 27 February 2014

Event Summary Paper

This document outlines the key findings of the first EU Civil-Society-Industry Dialogue of the COBALT project on "Ecodesign and New Business Models for a Circular Economy", which took place in Brussels on February 27th 2014. The Dialogue comprised **three interactive sessions:** keynote introductions from industry, civil society and policymaking; innovative case studies, and exchange on future pathways for stakeholder collaboration.

Introduction to the project and workshop objectives

On behalf of the project coordinator, Andreas Endl from the Institute for Managing Sustainability, Vienna University of Economics and Business in Austria, provided a short overview of the COBALT project and its objectives. Clementine O'Connor from BIO by Deloitte in France summarised the aims of the COBALT Dialogues and introduced concepts at the core of the discussion, such as ecodesign and the circular economy.

Session 1: Framing the dialogue – key insights and takeaways

KEYNOTE: ANTON BRUMMELHUIS, PHILIPS

- In a circular economy, high value can be found in the "inner circles" – e.g. focusing on design and maintenance challenges, such as product lifetime extension and future proofing, while maximising performance.
- A circular economy can be a "performance economy", in which economic, social and environmental gains are all increased.
- New business models can be developed based on circular economy thinking (e.g. light as a service at Philips)

KEYNOTE: JONNY HAZELL, GREEN ALLIANCE

Collaboration between stakeholders is a key driver of the circular economy:

- Industry could use long term contracts and joint ventures to align incentives.
- Government could provide a brokering role within industrial sectors and intervene in product design.
- CSOs could bring neutrality, credibility and environmental expertise.

KEYNOTE: VERENA FENNEMANN, DG RESEARCH & INNOVATION

- Circular economy needs to be approached via systemic change and thinking, including increasing demand, raising awareness and enabling all stakeholders to collectively take part in systemic eco-innovation to promote a circular economy.
- The circular economy concept is increasingly taken up by the European Commission with different initiatives, but there is still no common strategic policy document on the circular economy. Work in this direction is ongoing.

Intra-stakeholder dialogue

Participants were asked to exchange with others in their own stakeholder group and to identify their group's key competencies and role in fostering eco-design and driving forward a circular economy.

Key takeaways are summarised below:

Stakeholder group	Roles	Competencies
Industry	Optimising value of products and services; Rethinking and adapting to new models	Contributing product knowledge, knowledge about eco-design / circular economy and market knowledge
CSOs	Engaging citizens and providing pressure for an enabling system	Connecting the abstract with real life needs; Flagging real-world issues in the implementation of a circular economy and highlighting need for change
Policy makers	Ensuring the socio-economic welfare of the European economy	Steering behaviour of economic actors through policy and regulation
Researchers	Combining basic and applied science to make it societally relevant	Providing findings supporting circular economy and paradigm change

Session 2: Learning from frontrunners – key insights and takeaways

Civil society case study: Janet Gunter, The Restart Project

- Momentum is picking up on self-repair and on a Do-it-yourself approach to maximising product longevity.
- However, barriers and risks remain – e.g. design for repairability, access to documentation, etc.

Research case study: Philip Harfield, The Ecodesign Centre

- Eco-innovation across the different value chains is a very complex process involving changes in both social (values, attitudes, consumer behaviour etc.) and technical aspects (product design, production processes, technology).
- In a circular economy, recycling should be the safety catch-all scenario.

Industry case study: Aurela Shtiza, IMA-Europe

- Multiple case studies demonstrate that collaborative action and innovation can successfully boost sustainable material use and reduce environmental impacts in the industrial minerals sector.

Panel and plenary discussion – key insights and takeaways

- Which actors will drive change? SMEs can help drive the transition to new business models as they are light-footed, adaptable and can make changes more quickly. However, smaller businesses may also face greater risks in implementing new models. Consumers could also drive change if given a greater voice in product design.
- Producers may also be starting to understand the business case for repair, but what would a repair economy look like? Would a decentralised model with local repair services be feasible?

Session 3: Future avenues for collaboration

INTER-STAKEHOLDER DIALOGUE: PATHWAYS FOR COLLABORATION

Participants presented 2-3 recommendations for improving the collaboration between different stakeholders on ecodesign and related business models.

RECCOMENDATIONS

1. Use an iterative approach with cross-sector actors at different levels, different sectors, agreeing to take action and report back.
2. Organise permanent, regular roundtable working groups with a reconciliation mechanism for data sharing and best practice sharing.
3. Ensure capacity for Member States' perspectives to be brought up to EU level.
4. Clearly define problems and identify key areas for dialogue to provide focus for the discussion.
5. Make collaboration project-specific while considering the role of social entrepreneurs.
6. Use new technologies and social media to gain insights into real needs of consumers.
7. Use joint research to increase the knowledge base on the needs and wants of consumers.
8. Exchange best practice business models.
9. Ensure that the legislative framework is an enabler of innovation.

OUTLOOK AND CONCLUSIONS

The COBALT project partners provided a short conclusion of the Dialogue and asked a representative of each stakeholder group to emphasise key takeaways. These included: the need for better communication and collaboration between stakeholders, a strengthening of business cases for new models of eco-design, and further discussing remaining risks and barriers.