

EU Social Partners' Project on Circular Economy – Executive Summary - excerpt

Textbox -1 Recommendations for items of discussion within Social Dialogue

- Social Partners should promote the shift to circular economy by raising awareness and informing their affiliate members;
- Social Partners should bring the topic of Circular Economy on the agenda of Social Dialogue at different levels, including European Works Councils;
- At company level, employers and trade union representatives should use works councils and Health and Safety Committees to collect information and develop concrete measures to move towards circular business models while ensuring a fair transition for workers;
- At regional, sectoral and company levels, Social Partners should map and anticipate the needs for training, upskilling and reskilling of workers as well as develop inclusive training;
- Social Partners at the different levels should evaluate the consequences of the transition to Circular Economy on collective agreements;
- Social Partners should strengthen the implementation of health and safety measures to guarantee good working conditions and quality jobs in waste handling and re-manufacturing from secondary raw materials;
- Social Partners should discuss ways to help ensure the cost- and non-cost competitiveness of companies moving towards more circular business models;
- Social Partners should discuss ways to ensure that the shift to circular business models goes along with improving gender equality and inclusiveness of the labour market.

Textbox-2 Recommendations of discussion items between Social Partners and public authorities

- Policy makers should properly consider the impact that the transition to circular economy will have on the world of work;
- In terms of governance, policy makers should involve Social Partners in the design and implementation of European, national, regional and sectoral circular economy action plans and policies;
- Policy makers and public authorities should secure sufficient public and private funds to ensure a just transition in circular economy, notably through additional funding for skills technology and innovation development; Policy makers should create a market for secondary raw material;
- Policy makers should reinforce the competitive position of circular products on the market, including through stronger market surveillance and customs procedures to ensure fair competition and a level playing field;
- Policy makers should provide companies and trade unions representatives with a knowledge-based support;
- Social Partners should encourage policy makers to further train civil servants towards Green Public Procurements.

Textbox -3 Synthesis of findings on the main labour impacts of CE, overall and per sector.

	Overall (cross-sector)	Basic metals, materials and chemicals	Durable consumer goods	Retail	Construction	Waste management
Employment volume	Small positive effect	Negative effect in primary production. The sector could minimize losses by switching to sorting, purification and manufacture of secondary raw materials.	Possible negative effect (e.g. in manufacturing of electronics, machinery, cars, agriculture and food)	Possible negative effect, dependent upon the incorporation of leasing, renting, sharing, repair and second-hand into traditional retail	Disparities within sub-sectors. Activities linked to innovative materials and renovation expected to see a positive effect.	Positive effect, especially in recycling
Qualification and skills	General trend towards more mechanized / technical work and social skills. Increase in mid-level occupation, losses in low-level occupations	Skills to work with irregular inputs (recycled materials)	IT-skills and soft skills (automotive industry) Technical skills for repair and maintenance activities	Deeper knowledge about products (lifetime, maintenance, etc.)	Technicians, craft and related trades for new materials	Increasingly more skilled, technology-intensive/ mechanised work, but skillset needed is context-dependent
Competitive position	Gains, mainly via resource efficiency, capitalising on the market for sustainable and high-quality products. Difficulties linked to cost-competitiveness.	Possible negative effect. Could benefit from switch to recycled materials	Possible negative effect, but these could partly be offset by use of recycled materials and eco-design innovations.	Possible negative effect, but opportunities exist in sharing, second-hand markets, etc.	Those capitalizing on utilization of recycled materials could see positive effects.	Positive effect. CE also helps attracting skilled workers
Forms and organisation of work	Potential changes in the applicable collective agreement. Little impact expected on work contracts. Opportunities for higher quality jobs.					
Health and safety				No significant negative impacts expected		Automated machinery for precision recycling brings benefits. Exposure to hazardous substances and usage of secondary materials need to be carefully handled.

