

On the road to Circular Economy

The goal of Circular Economy is to minimize energy use. This is crucial for our planet and, in fact, for the whole human kind. Our economic well-being will not last if we keep ignoring our environment. What is sometimes not understood is that economy and environment go hand in hand and we now have excellent chances of improving both.

For the purposes of this article, we will look at one important part of Circular Economy, recycling and more specifically, recycling hazardous substances in a way that does not harm our health or the environment.

Nobody wants to “recycle” hazardous chemicals uncontrolled – but we also can’t afford to paralyze recycling of materials “just in case”. Material recycling is extremely important to provide feedstock for the industry and diminish our dependency on virgin raw materials.

So - what are the solutions?

Anticipation. When we already have a mountain of mixed waste in front of us, it is usually too late to efficiently recycle it and to guarantee a high level of protection for health and environment. A simple solution is sorting waste efficiently in the place-of-origin.

Information. We have to include information about a products’ or subjects’ content and its recyclability in every article. This doesn’t help with existing products, but would make a big difference in the future.

The Big Picture. We have to see the benefits of secondary raw materials, not only the threats. There is a need for incentives to ensure secondary raw materials can compete with virgin raw materials, for example by financially rewarding CO₂ reduction. Economic and environmental advantages of secondary raw materials are politically recognized, but they are not reflected in current material prices.

Waste and chemical legislation has a major role to play when solutions are sought, but there is also something everyone can do in a much faster pace - change our own behaviour and adopt the principles of Circular Economy in everyday life.

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