Accelerating towards a circular economy

Final report for European Commission project: Boosting circular economy among SMEs in Europe
- February 2019
- KPMG.com
024-2019/JT/AW/CC/sk
Mr. Peter Czaga  
European Commission – DG Environment  
Office BU-05 04/130  
1049 Brussels  
Belgium  

Amstelveen (the Netherlands), February 8th 2019  

Subject: Finalization of project *Boosting the circular economy among SMEs*  

Dear European Commission, Mr. Czaga,  

We appreciate the opportunity to have been able to assist the European Commission (hereafter: the Commission) explore what route is most effective and efficient to boost the transition towards a circular economy among SMEs. On behalf of the Commission we have:  

- Trained 28 SME support organisations on the subject of circular economy and have helped them to set-up programmes to assist SME to become more circular (Task 1);  
- Advised 5 regional authorities on how they can boost the transition towards a circular economy among SMEs (Task 2);  
- Supported 13 highly promising circular solutions to scale-up across Europe (Task 3); and  
- Organized a two-day closing event during which we have brought these and other parties together to provide further guidance on how to scale-up / support SMEs (Task 4).  

Via this pilot project the Commission may reach up to approximately 800,000 SMEs. This corresponds to roughly 3.8% of all SMEs in Europe (Eurostat, 2018). However significantly more SMEs would need to be reached in order to realize a fast and smooth transition towards a circular economy. Since SMEs face significant hurdles to become more circular and account for the majority of economic activity in the EU. Which limits the speed at which Europe can transition towards a circular economy.  

In this document we report on the set-up of the previously listed tasks, the impact, and feedback of participants.  

We reckon that this report serves as an instrument for the Commission in deciding whether and how it would like to continue to help boosting SME’s to become more circular.  

Yours faithfully,  
KPMG Advisory N.V.  

Jerwin Tholen  
Director, KPMG Sustainability
# Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reports on Tasks</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 1: Training support organisations to help SME’s</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 2: Helping highly promising solutions to scale-up across Europe</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 3: Advising on how to boost the transition in the region</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task 4: Bringing stakeholders from all over Europe together</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 List of participants Task 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 List of participants Task 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Social media attention around the platform</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 List of participants Task 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive Summary
In 2016 the European Commission (hereafter: the Commission) has adopted the: Circular Economy Action Plan, with measures to stimulate the transition towards a circular economy.

Since adopting the Circular Economy Package the Commission has observed an increased uptake by corporations to adopt resource efficiency, eco-innovation and/or circular economy strategies and practices. However the Commission also observed that SMEs are experiencing more difficulties in adopting such strategies and practices, due to: their more limited organisational, technological and financial capacity; and less access to (pre-) financing for circular solutions.

The hurdles faced by SMEs to adopt circular economy practices significantly limit the speed at which the European economy can transition towards a circular economy, since SMEs: (a) represent 99% of all businesses in the EU, (b) account for 85% of new jobs created over the last years and provided two-thirds of the total private sector employment in the EU (Eurostat, 2018).

With this project the Commission aimed to pilot which route to bring assets (e.g. knowledge, networks and tools) to SMEs to address these hurdles is most effective and efficient. With the goal to be able decide how to reach a sizeable proportion of the European SME population.

Via this project the Commission tested the following routes:

- training 28 SME support organisations on how to set-up and/or expand their support programmes on the subject of circular economy (Task 1);
- helping 13 highly promising Green Solution Providers (GSPs) to scale-up across Europe (Task 2);
- and advising 5 regional authorities on how to boost the they can boost the transition towards a circular economy (Task 3).

Via these trainings to SME support organisations, helping GSPs to scale-up, and providing policy advice to regional authorities the Commission may already reach up to over: 800,000 SMEs.

Following these various Tasks, the Commission has organized a two-day closing event in Brussels to: (1) directly help more SMEs and (2) to bring these assets to more SME support organisations and Regional authorities who in turn can help more SMEs. In total 135 people attended this conference.

For this project KPMG, MVO Nederland (CSR Netherlands) and Circle Economy have supported the Commission as implementation partners.
Task 1:
Training support organisations to help SMEs
**Task summary**

In recent years Europe has seen an increased uptake of circular economy strategies and practices by mainly larger companies. Although the business drivers for corporates and SMEs to become more circular are the same, it is generally more difficult for SMEs to adopt circular economy strategies and practices as for larger companies. This limits the speed at which Europe can transition towards a more circular economy since SMEs are the backbone of the European economy. To help SMEs to overcome these hurdles some SME support organizations have set-up support programmes that offer services to inform SMEs about the business benefits of adopting circular economy practices and implement these. As part of this project, we helped 27 SME support organizations across Europe to set-up such programmes. Via these trainings the Commission may have potentially indirectly supported up to 330,000 SMEs to adopt circular economy strategies and practices.

**A channel to provide SMEs with the support they need to implement circular practices**

SMEs play a crucial role in Europe’s economies by providing jobs and offering valuable products and services. Yet, in contrast to their positive impact, SMEs in Europe also have negative externalities related to resource use and the generation of waste streams. In comparison to larger corporations, SMEs have relatively smaller capacity and less availability of knowledge and financial resources. This makes it more difficult for SMEs to change their operations, product design, or the sourcing of raw materials. This is the rationale for any investment in transferring knowledge to SMEs.

SME support organisations are a channel to reach SMEs and provide them with the support they need in order to move towards a more resource-efficient and circular economy. To be able to fulfil their role as facilitators, SME support organisations need to gain and improve their knowledge of circular economy and EU level instruments (both financial and non-financial), and increase their capacity to extend the scope of service provisions offered to SMEs. The aim of this Task 1 was to provide interested organisations in the focus sectors of the EU Action Plan on Circular Economy (plastics, food waste, critical raw materials, biomass & bio-based products, and construction & demolition) with the required knowledge through capacity building.

**A group of SME support organisations with a wide reach, in the right sectors and together cover a large part of Europe**

In total we received 190 applications from SME support organizations to participate to receive training. To be able to recommend a set of 28 support organisations to receive training to the Commission we developed a system to score organisations on: (a) their motivation, (b) their capacity to further distribute the knowledge they have gained from the training, (c) regional characteristics and (d) their awareness on the subject in advance of the training. After scoring all applicants we made a pre-selection of the support organizations with the highest scores. From these top scorers we selected a set of SME support organizations with: a high score, with a large reach, from different geographical areas within the EU and with a maximum of two SME support organizations per EU member state (in that case we recommended to select the SME support organizations that we expect will be able to reach/help the most SMEs).

The final selection of participants was made by the European Commission. This resulted in a set of 28 support organisations from 20 EU member states. Later one organization was added which originally was selected to participate as a regional authority in Task 3. For a list of the selected organisations that we have trained, refer to: appendix 1.1.
A practical training focussed on starting to set-up local support programmes

The goal of the trainings was to inform the organisations (and their local stakeholders) about: (a) the concept of circular economy, (b) the hurdles faced by SMEs to become more circular, (c) how they could help SMEs overcome these hurdles and (d) to help them start developing their own / expand their support programme (see links for examples of such programmes: MVO Nederland, Circle Economy, the Rabobank Circular Challenge, Crescimento Verde and Circular Catalunya).

The trainings were provided by experts in the field of circular economy of KPMG and MVO Nederland with experience in setting-up and running support programmes. For the trainings KPMG, MVO Nederland and Circle Economy have developed a booklet consisting out 14 modules on general subjects within the field of circular economy and a selection of 5 deep dives on topics that were requested by participants. These training materials will become publically available on the website of the European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Centre (EREK). The training ended with a session to jointly draft the outlines of a local support programme.

Following the trainings the trainers kept in contact with the participants via conference calls in order to continue to help the organisation with developing and implementing a support programme. Often by providing practical guidance and sharing experiences. In addition the implementation of these programmes was supported through offering the Circle Assessment tool that has been developed by Circle Economy. This tool provides businesses the opportunity to see how circularity relates to their business, and learn about relevant current operational examples in other similar businesses. Whereas it provides the SME support organizations with insight in the uptake of circularity amongst their members, and the needs of members to become more circular.

The trainings were well received, and there is significant demand for more support

From feedback we have learned that the trainings were well received. Participants have indicated that they learned a lot. They mainly valued the practical nature of the trainings and the opportunity to be able to speak with experts with hands-on experience. Following the trainings we have learned that there is significant demand for additional support. Many of the trained organisations would like to receive more help with setting up services and programmes via which they in turn can help SMEs.
There was strong demand for training:

190 applications for 28 opportunities

Regional stakeholders were invited to join the trainings. In total: 242 professionals were trained from over 81 organisations.

A small selection of organisations that were trained have since jointly reached over: 7208 SMEs

“It was great to have you here and you left a good impression with all participants. The training offered me some new inspiration and we are already planning a information event with Denkstatt and the Chamber of Industries in April.”

(Romanian National Centre for Sustainable Production and Consumption)

“Very helpful and motivating”, “Good training”, “Learned a lot” and “Lots of fun”

(Business Upper Austria)

“(1) Very Useful, (2) Interaction was best possible solution, (3) Working on specific Slovenian cases, (4) We want more ..., (5) The best visit in 10 years! and (6) Very practical”

(Association of Chemical Industries of Slovenia at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia)

After the training my organisation feels more equipped to inform SMEs about the benefits of circular economy and help them to implement circular practices. (N=11)

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
Task 2: Helping highly promising solutions to scale-up across Europe
Task summary
Adopting circular economy strategies and practices can create new and sustainable competitive advantages for European SMEs. There are more and more regional examples of SMEs that successfully have implemented circular business models, generating sustainable cash-flows and creating a sustainable competitive advantage. However these companies often struggle to scale-up across Europe.

To help a selection of SMEs to overcome these struggles we, as part of this project, we have provided KPMG scale-up support services to- and launched a platform to highlight a selection of highly promising circular solutions. Aiming to help realize more examples for- and promote circular solutions among SMEs.

Boosting the circular economy by helping Green solution providers to scale-up across Europe

Adopting circular economy strategies and practices can create new and sustainable competitive advantages for European SMEs. Currently there are many regional examples of SMEs that successfully have implemented circular business models, generating sustainable cash-flows and creating a sustainable competitive advantage. Examples of this are: FLOOW2 (in the Netherlands), Alisea (in Italy) and Herning Vand (in Denmark). However these companies often struggle to scale-up across Europe. Thereby missing out on opportunities to: (a) help other companies become more circular by adopting their circular solutions, and (b) inspire other companies to become more circular by sharing their success stories.

To address this issue, we have provided scale-up support to a selection of highly promising Green Solution Providers (GSPs). With the goal to help them scale-up across Europe.

Selecting 13 highly promising Green solution providers

In response to the call for expression of interest, we received 89 applications from GSPs to participate in the programme. To be able to recommend a shortlist of 25 GSPs to the Commission, solution providers were scored on: (a) their motivation, (b) their scale-up potential, (c) the characteristics of their green solution, and (d) the maturity of the green solution. From the top scorers we selected a shortlist consisting of 25 GSPs: with a high score, from different geographical areas within the EU and active in different focus sectors (corresponding with the focus areas of the EU Action Plan on Circular Economy). From this shortlist the Commission has selected 15 entities to participate in the project. Out of which two have been purchased by corporates over the course of the project. For a list of the selected green solution providers that have participated in the programme, refer to: appendix 2.1.

Tailored support and visibility to help Green solution providers to scale-up across Europe

We helped the selected GSPs to scale-up across Europe, by: (a) providing them with tailored support from KPMG professionals, and (b) making them more visible throughout Europe by promoting their solution on an online platform. Via questionnaires dispersed to the GSPs we have gathered their support needs. We have held expert support calls with six solution providers that were eager to receive expert support from KPMG, and undertook potential follow-up actions. In addition, we have been able to provide matchmaking support to the green solution providers at the conference in December – for more details see p.22.
In addition to the tailored support we have created an online platform: scalingcircularbusiness.eu, where we showcased the solutions offered by the GSPs. On this platform, visitors were able to view the thirteen circular solutions, that were all provided with their individual solution page. Following a short introduction on the specific circular solution, this page displayed:

- The value proposition of the GSP;
- The circular impact of the solution;
- What makes this solution unique;
- What the solution provider is looking for to be able to scale-up across Europe;
- A real world example of the solution;
- Background info on the company and awards / special news coverage.

Via this solution page, visitors could either directly “get in contact” with the solution provider or indicate that they “would like to meet” with this GSP. The Commission, KPMG, MVO Nederland and Circle Economy have jointly promoted this platform via their online channels. The messages shared by KPMG, MVO Nederland and Circle Economy, with the hashtag #Scalingcircularbusiness have reached at least 16 mln people. The platform resulted in at least two concrete leads for GSPs.
There was quite strong demand for the programme:

89 applications for 15 opportunities

On www.scalingcircularbusiness.eu

13 GSPs showcased their circular solution we provided the opportunity to connect with circular solutions throughout Europe at anytime

With the hashtag #Scalingcircularbusiness as well as via direct communication channels, over 16 million people have been reached

# posts
# impressions
# shares

178 3960000 29
31 11067000 34
16 69000 9

The Scaling Circular Business logo has been a successful way to communicate about the programme

Running up to the conference, the platform has been:
- used to showcase the 13 GSPs;
- updated end of October to be able to have people register via the website;
- mentioned in all communication;
- mentioned in the conference programme.
Task 3
Advising on how to boost the transition in the region
Task summary

The concept of circular economy is being applied more and more often by businesses, especially by corporates and to a lesser extent by SMEs. This is a limitation for a fast and smooth transition towards a circular economy, since SMEs account for the majority of economic activity within the EU. The slower uptake of circular economy practices by SMEs is due to various hurdles they are facing. These hurdles can be reduced by setting-up regional SME support programmes that focus on inspiring SMEs to- and helping them with implementing circular economy practices.

In order to boost the transition towards a circular economy we have conducted study visits- and provided policy briefs to five regional authorities. Via these policy briefs we have provided guidance to these regional authorities on how they could accelerate the transition towards a circular economy among SMEs in their region. Common recommendations included: realizing SME support programmes in collaboration with SME support organisations, boosting demand for circular solutions via public procurement and guiding SMEs towards suitable financial instruments.

Helping regional authorities to facilitate the transition towards a circular economy for SMEs

Regions in Europe are dynamic centers of culture, business and local political and economic power. Close cooperation of local stakeholders within these regions can foster creativity and innovation. Regional or industrial development strategies can have a significant impact on the activities and performance of SMEs. By including policies and actions related to resource efficiency, circular economy and eco-innovation within the regional or industrial development strategies, regional authorities can create opportunities and stimulate activities of SMEs in these areas.

Across the various regional authorities in Europe, differences can be observed in awareness, expertise and the rate of adoption of policies and actions that stimulate circular economy, resource efficiency and eco-innovation. The objective of Task 3 was to support the regional authorities of five regions with advice on how to boost the circular economy among SMEs in their region. Each of the regional authorities has been provided with a policy brief containing recommendations and a roadmap to realize them.

A group mixed group of regional authorities

In total we received 64 applications from regional authorities to participate in Task 3. To be able to recommend five organizations to provide with advice we have developed a scoring system, which included criteria on:

a. the potential environmental benefits;

b. the concentration of SMEs;

c. the importance of sectors related to priority areas identified in the EU action plan on Circular Economy to the regional economy;

d. and links to between the concept of circular economy and the smart specialization strategies (S3) of the region.

After scoring all applicants we made a pre-selection of the top twenty regional authorities with the highest scores. From this top twenty we have selected a shortlist set of regional authorities with: a high score, from different geographical sectors of Europe and with different GDP levels.

The final selection of participants was made by the European Commission. This resulted in a set of 6 regional authorities from 5 EU member states. Later one organization indicated that they preferred to receive the training instead of the policy brief, was transferred to Task 1. For a list of the selected regional authorities that we advised, refer to: appendix 3.1.
Figure 5: Potential reach of project via Task 3

480,000 SMEs

In five regions

Represents roughly 2.3%
of all SMEs in Europe

A practical training focused on starting to set-up local support programmes

Following the selection of the participating regional authorities, experts of KPMG have conducted a policy review for- and two-day study visit to each of the regions. During these visits the experts spoke with a wide variety of regional stakeholders. The insights gained from the policy review and study visit, provided the basis for a policy brief containing recommendations on how to remove barriers for and stimulate SMEs to adopt circular economy practices.

Recurring recommendations were to:

- to set-up such programmes in collaboration with regional stakeholders with a direct relationship with SMEs (e.g. industry associations);
- boost demand for circular products and services through public procurement
- and support in guiding SMEs towards suitable financial instruments or develop financial instruments to provide seed- / start-up- / high-risk-low-interest financing.

Regional authorities appreciated the policy brief, but would like to receive more structural support

The participating regional authorities all appreciated the insights they gained from the visit and the policy brief. Various of the regional authorities have also indicated that they have taken actions to follow up on the provided recommendations. However regions also indicated that they would like to receive more structural support with implementing the provided roadmap, building support programmes and other additional questions.
There was strong demand for our support:

- **64 applications** for **6 opportunities**

During the study visits, experts met with **90 local stakeholders**

---

“**The roadmap section will guide us with the steps to progressive implementation of the green and circular economy strategy**”

(Regional Government of Extremadura)

“**Your advice has helped us to start developing a support programme in collaboration with Cofindustria**”

(Region of Lombardy)

---

The visit, policy brief and our participation in the event will help us to accelerate the transition towards a circular economy among SMEs in our region.

(N=4)

![Survey Results]

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly agree
Task 4

Bringing stakeholders from all over Europe together
Task summary

As part of this project, The Commission together with KPMG, MVO Nederland and Circle Economy, organized a two-day conference in Brussels. The objective of this conference was two-fold: (1) to help SME support organisations and regional authorities from all across Europe to develop SME support programmes to inspire SMEs to- and help SMEs to implement circular economy practices and (2) to help Green Solutions Providers (GSPs) to present their circular solution to a wider audience and receive further support. At least 135 participants from 20 EU member states joined the event.

An event to multiply the impact of the overall project

The event was aimed to bring the participants from the various work streams- and other stakeholders together, in order to help them: either (1) to establish programs to help SMEs implement circular economy practices or (2) to scale-up their circular solution across Europe.

This objective was certainly achieved. Over two-days more than 135 people from at least 20 EU member states attended the conference. The majority of which were representatives of SME support organisations and regional authorities. During the conference we have inspired and helped these entities to set-up regional support programmes, by: (a) showcasing various support activities, (b) creating settings in which they could share their experiences, and (c) round table discussions facilitated by experts.

We have helped the participating GSPs and other SMEs to: (x) sharpen their pitch and business model, (y) attract financing from investors and/or EU funding programs and (z) pitch their solutions to possible business partners.

For a summary overview of the conference agenda, see: figure 7.

Figure 7: Conference agenda summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda item day 1</th>
<th>Agenda item Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:00</td>
<td>Registration of participants and welcome coffee</td>
<td>Registration of participants and welcome coffee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:30</td>
<td>Plenary opening</td>
<td>Plenary opening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10:00</td>
<td>• Introduction to the project</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-10:30</td>
<td>• 1 min. Pitches by 13 Green Solution Providers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11:00</td>
<td>Workshops Round 1:</td>
<td>Panel discussion on value of SME support programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-11:30</td>
<td>• Creating circular business models</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30-12:00</td>
<td>• Circular finance desk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-12:30</td>
<td>• What can the EC do for you?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-13:00</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
<td>Lunch break</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00-13:30</td>
<td>(Market place with GSPs and information stands of</td>
<td>(Market place with GSPs and information stands of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:30-14:00</td>
<td>Commission programs and initiatives)</td>
<td>Commission programs and initiatives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:00-14:30</td>
<td>Workshops round 2:</td>
<td>Round tables: How to help SMEs to become more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14:30-15:00</td>
<td>• Circular finance desk</td>
<td>circular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:00-15:30</td>
<td>• Business benefits of circularity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:30-16:00</td>
<td>• Creating circular business</td>
<td>Networking opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:00-16:30</td>
<td>Plenary Round-up</td>
<td>Plenary Round-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:30-17:00</td>
<td>Reception</td>
<td>Reception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 1: Helping circular solutions to scale-up across Europe

The focus of the first day of the conference was to help the selected GSPs and other participating circular SMEs to scale-up across Europe.

The programme for this day started with two short plenary presentations by: Arnoud Walrecht (Global Lead Circular Economy, KPMG) and Peter Czaga, on the project in general and the background of the project. After this opening session the selected GSPs were given the opportunity to pitch solutions on stage to the complete audience. Following the plenary opening participants joined two break-out sessions for which they had applied out of a selection of five:

- **Creating circular business models:** during this workshop we helped 45 participants to create a- or sharpen their circular business model. This was done through a three step process: (1) generating ideas for circular practices, (2) selecting the most impactful and realistic idea, and (3) sharpening this idea by using the Business Model Canvas. Ideas included: circular espresso cups, multiple use coffee sticks and circular coffee machines.

- **Circular finance desk:** difficulties to attract finance is generally perceived to be one of the main hurdles for SMEs to be able to implement circular economy practices. During this sessions we aimed to reduce this hurdle for 30 parties, whom were given the opportunity to pitch their circular business plan to: investors (Rabobank, Circularity Capital) and/or EU funding programs (Horizon 2020, LIFE). Resulting in 5 potential deals between investors and the entities who pitched.

- **What can the European Commission do for you?:** During this session representatives from a selection EU financial- and non-financial instruments and communities (Horizon, LIFE, SME instrument, EASME, EEN and EREK) explained how their instrument/community can help SMEs to implement circular economy practices. Roughly 35 people joined this session. Participants made good use of the possibility to ask questions about these programs. Many questions focused on: how to maximize the likelihood to receive financing through EU programs, and on the suitability of various programs for specific groups of SMEs.

- **Business benefits of circularity:** During this session, KPMG experts provided insights in- and examples of how to substantiate the financial- and societal benefits (in terms of externalities) of circular business models. In total over 50 participants joined this session. During the sessions there was a lot of room for participants to ask questions. Most of these questions focused on the financial viability of the highlighted examples. This helped to convince participants that circular business models can both be financially successful while also reducing environmental impact. Other questions and remarks related to that governments could do more to support, reward and incentivize circular frontrunners.

- **Creating circular business:** For this break-out, meetings were facilitated between GSPs and parties interested in applying their solutions from all over Europe. Helping these GSPs to: create business or to scale-up by entering new geographical markets.

All sessions were joined by: GSPs and other participating SMEs, SME support organisations and Regional authorities. The latter parties indicated that they will copy the concept and content of the event in their own context and programs focusing on SMEs and circular economy.
Day 2: Realizing effective support programs

During the second day the programme focussed more on helping SME support organisations and Regional authorities to realize effective programmes through which to inspire- and help SMEs to adopt circular economy practices. The programme started with a short plenary opening- and introduction about the overall project by Arnoud Walrecht. Followed by a series of plenary speeches:

Fulvia Raffaelli (Head of Unit Clean Technologies and Products, European Commission - DG Grow): Underlined the ambition of the European Commission to transition towards a circular economy, and that this transition is an essential and major part of the Commission's efforts to limit climate change. Her main message was that the link between circular economy and climate efforts will become stronger over the coming years.

Claudia Fusco (Head of Unit Environmental Knowledge, Eco-innovation and SMEs, European Commission - DG Environment): Explained that although SMEs can only be reached through support programs within a regional / local context, these programs and individual SMEs both must receive coherent support from the European Commission. Since we require a fast and smooth transition towards a circular economy, but other stakeholders are not yet sufficiently stepping in to help SMEs or reduce hurdles for SMEs to become more circular (e.g. financing).

Veronique Willems (Secretary General, SME United): Elaborated on how digitalization, globalization and sustainability are the three main challenges that SMEs face. Whereas we need SMEs to overcome these challenges, since SMEs account for the majority of economic activity. She explained that without large scale adoption of circular economy practices amongst SMEs, goals with regards to the transition towards a circular economy will not be met.

Teresa Jorge (Policy officer, Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Centro): Told about how the Centro region (Portugal) had experienced the study visit they received via this project, their insights from this visit and the resulting policy brief, and how they will incorporate these insights into the Regional agenda for circular economy. Most of her insights related to how the Region could stimulate demand for circular products and services, via Green Public Procurement (GPP).

Maria Symeonidou (Manager EU Projects, Heraklion Chamber of Commerce and Industry): Spoke about why she and her organisation had applied to receive training via this project, what her takeaways were from this training and which steps they had taken since to establish an SME support programme on circular economy on the island of Crete. Her main takeaways were the hurdles for SMEs to become more circular, and practical guidance on how to inspire SMEs to think about circular economy practices.

and Geanne van Arkel (Head of Sustainable Development, Interface): Told the inspiring story Interface, which has grown significantly over the past decades through circular innovations.
These plenary presentations were followed by a panel discussion. During this panel discussion, panel member discussed amongst one another- and with members from the audience around three questions: (I) what are the largest hurdles for SMEs to become circular?, (II) How can SME support organisations help SMEs? and (III) How can regional authorities advance the circular economy among SMEs? The main conclusion of this panel discussion was that SME support organisations and Regional authorities both have a key role in reaching, inspiring and helping SMEs to join the circular economy. Therefore the on the ground support which was provided via this project was considered to be more than welcome.

The panel comprised of: Guido Leena (Director Sustainable Development, SME United), Sven Schade (Assistant to Deputy Director General, European Commission - DG Environment), Jos Reinhoudt (Circular Economy expert, MVO Nederland), Maria Grazia Pedrana (Assistant Director International Relations & Cooperation, Region of Lombardy), Geanne van Arkel and Arnoud Walrecht.

In the afternoon four round table discussions were organized. These discussions were guided and facilitated by experts of: KPMG, MVO Nederland and Circle Economy. The sessions focussed on enabling SME support organisations and Regional authorities to share their experiences. Allowing them to share their challenges and solutions / (best) practices amongst one another. For instance:

• One region shared its challenges with GPP and was given advise on how to implement GPP guidelines;

• An SME support organisation shared their experiences with using the Circle Assessment tool to engage with members on the subject of circular economy;

• Representatives from two neighboring regions met and talked about how they could collaborate;

• and Various SMEs expressed the importance to communicate about finance opportunities, such as subsidies and grants, to target groups.

When the group was unable to provide answers to these challenges, often the facilitating experts could provide guidance or share examples.

At the end of the day, all participants had the opportunity to network and meet. The event was ended with a lively reception.
Participants included:
- 34 representatives of SME support organisations;
- 31 representatives of Regional authorities;
- and 53 representatives of GSPs / SMEs.

Pitches during the conference helped to facilitate 5 potential deals with banks / investors, and resulted in many more leads for GSPs and SMEs.

Over: 135 participants from at least 20 EU member states

“Too many SMEs must still rely on their own financial resources and technical expertise, when they want to become more circular. In this way we will not meet European goals”
(Claudia Fusco, European Commission)

“There are many examples which showcase that joining the circular economy is possible for SMEs and can be a great investment. We should only tell this to all SMEs!”
(Geanne van Arkel, Interface)

“We must help SMEs to adapt to the new and innovative business models which will shape circular economy”
(Fulvia Raffaelli, European Commission)

Experts from: KPMG, MVO Nederland and Circle Economy have engaged with representatives of at least 40 SME support organisations or regional authorities on how to establish effective support programs to help SMEs join the circular economy.
Appendices

1.1 List participants Task 1
2.1 List participants Task 2
2.2 Social media attention around the platform
3.1 List participants Task 3
1.1 List of participants Task 1

The following organisations have received training on the subject of circular economy and on how to set-up/expand their support programme to help SMEs implement circular economy practices:

- Association of Chemical Industries of Slovenia at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (Slovenia);
- Confindustria Veneto SIAV S.p.A (Italy);
- Industrial Association of Navarra (AIN)(Spain);
- National Centre for Sustainable Production and Consumption (Romania);
- Chambre de Commerce et d’Industrie Rouen Métropole (France);
- Federación de Industrias de Alimentación y Bebidas (FIAB)(Italy);
- Creation development eco-enterprises (CD2E)(France);
- Corporate Social Responsibility Platform of Latvia (CSR Latvia)(Latvia);
- Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation (Cyprus);
- Center for Entrepreneurship and Executive Development – Bulgaria (Bulgaria);
- Technical Institute of Heraklion Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Greece);
- Bureaueu Nyborg (Denmark);
- Slovak Business Agency (Slovakia);
- Hungarian Association of Environmental Enterprises (KSZGYSZ)(Hungary);
- AREA Science Park (Italy);
- Malta Chamber of SMEs (GRTU)(Malta);
- Cyprus Energy Agency (Cyprus);
- Consorzio Ecodomus (Italy);
- Special Agency of the Chambers of Commerce of Le Marche region (Italy);
- Society for the development of the province of Burgos (SODEBUR)(Spain);
- The Small Enterprises’ Institute, The Hellenic Confederation of Professionals, Craftsmen & Merchants (IME GSEVEE)(Greece);
- Badajoz Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services (Spain);
- Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce (United Kingdom);
- The Triangle Region (Denmark);
- Business Upper Austria -OÖ WirtschaftsagenturGmbH / Cleantech-Cluster (Austria);
- CleantechFor Est (Estonia);
- Petites i Mitjanes Empreses de Catalunya (PIMEC)(Spain); and
- Varaždin County / Varaždin Chamber of Commerce (Croatia).
2.1 List of participants Task 2

The following organisations have been supported to scale-up across Europe:

- FLOOW2 World's Reset Button;
- Circular IQ;
- Plastic Repair Systems;
- BIOAZUL;
- Searious Business;
- ITeC;
- EcoFITT ApS;
- ITIA – CNR;
- Fit Things;
- iPoint-systems;
- Act & Sorb
- HydroScan; and
- Dust Shelter Solutions.
2.2 Social media attention around the platform

Is your company in need of a circular boost? Out of hundreds of applications, the European Commission has selected 13 European circular solution providers for the #scalingcircularbusiness project. Find out which solutions can help you become circular and sustainable!

Willemijn Peeters + 1st Ocean ambassador of the Netherlands

Interested in closing your company's plastic loop? We are selected for #scalingcircularbusiness project by the European Commission to help companies gain insight into their plastics. Connect with us and boost your company.

www.scalingcircularbusiness.eu

Do you want to close loops, buy circular, or improve the circular performance of your business? The European Commission has selected us in the #scalingcircularbusiness project to accelerate companies that want to increase their circularity. Drop us a message here when you are interested: https://hkrl.in/xpQhSdF

Circle Economy

5,519 followers
3moEdited

Congratulations to Circular IQ who has been selected as EU Top 50 CleanTech Start-ups by the Climate-KIC. The software company has also been chosen by the #ScalingCircularBusiness platform as one of the 13 promising solutions that can help other businesses to become circular across Europe! KPMG, MVV Nederland. In addition, the Dutch startup has been appointed as one of the 8 finalists in the Green Alley Award, the first European start-up award for the Circular Economy! Find out more about the 6 competing companies working in the areas of the digital circular economy, recycling and waste prevention.

Europe @Euransafit, 11 Jul. 2018

Does your business want to join the circular economy? @EU_Commission launched its platform for #ScalingCircularBusiness in Europe, offering SMEs the opportunity to connect with promising circular solution providers. Visit the platform at buff.ly/2Og3hWk and look for the...

Pablo Gálvez Esquivel @pabloalgalz, 6 Aug. 2018

The EU Commission launched a platform for #ScalingCircularBusiness in Europe, offering SMEs the opportunity to connect with circular solution providers. Visit the platform at buff.ly/2Og3hWk and look for the...
3.1 List of participants Task 3

The following regional authorities have received advice on how to boost the transition towards a circular economy among SMEs in their region:

- Regional Government of Lombardy, Ministry for the Environment;
- Regional Development Agency of the Ljubljana Urban Region;
- Catalan Government, Department of Territory and Sustainability;
- ‘Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Centro’; and
- The Regional Government of Extremadura.
The contacts at KPMG in connection with this report are:

**Jerwin Tholen**  
Director, KPMG Sustainability  
Tel.: +31 30 6581744  
Tholen.Jerwin@kpmg.nl

**Arnoud Walrecht**  
Director, KPMG Sustainability  
Tel.: +31 20 6564584  
Walrecht.Arnoud@kpmg.nl

**Carlo Cuijpers**  
Sr. Consultant, KPMG Sustainability  
Tel.: +31 6 10380602  
Cuijpers.Carlo@kpmg.nl