

Case Study // Round Table SDG 12: Towards a circular economy: innovation for sustainable value chains

The international Green Deal North Sea Resources Roundabout (NSRR): boosting the circular economy in the North Sea region through a collaborative, multi-stakeholder approach.

The Netherlands

Level: national

Summary

Circular economy is a response to the aspiration for sustainable growth in the context of the growing pressure of production and consumption on the world's resources and environment. The use of waste material as a secondary resource is one of the first actions that businesses can consider to improve both their economic and environmental performance. Value chains are often cross border in nature and so require trans-border shipment of secondary resources.

However businesses perceive barriers in trans-border shipment of waste and secondary resources and are reluctant to invest in starting or scaling up their activities in this field. Addressing these barriers and identifying shared solutions together has the potential to accelerate the transition towards a circular economy.

The NSRR is a so-called Green Deal: a bottom-up, multi-stakeholder approach developed to enable frontrunners in the fields of green growth, circular economy or sustainability. Within the context of the NSRR, business, governments and non-governmental organisations from France, Flanders, The Netherlands and the UK work together to tackle barriers to the international trade and transportation of secondary resources. The over all aim is to boost circular economy in the region and to make regulation that is more conducive to new developments in this field.

Situation

Europe's economy is hugely dependent on the import of raw materials.

Every year in the European Union (EU), nearly 15 tonnes of materials are used per person, while each EU citizen generates, on average, more than 4.5 tonnes of waste annually, almost half of which is disposed of in landfill sites. Within the North Sea region, the economics ties of France, Flanders, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom are very close, for products but also for waste/secondary resources.

These economic ties and their shared ambition for a more circular economy, moved them to collaborate with the aim to increase industry uptake of secondary resources by facilitating cross border use of secondary resources.

Strategy

The Netherlands have a very positive experience in using an instrument called “Green Deal” to promote green growth. In this approach the central government facilitates innovative and voluntary initiatives from society – businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) and local authorities – by supporting entry into networks or by addressing legal barriers if needed. This Green Deal approach empowers frontrunners by enabling new and ambitious sustainable developments. This approach is based on voluntary, bottom up initiatives. Actions in Green Deals are specific (SMART), but are not legally enforceable. There is no financial support involved in the NSRR.

The NSRR is based upon the experience with the Dutch Green Deal approach and includes similar elements.

Key elements are: integral cooperation and a practical case-by-case approach.

- Private Initiators and Governmental Participants cooperate to identify barriers and consider solutions for a limited number of specific secondary resource cases between countries. These barriers are amongst others related to the “waste or resource” status and hamper cross border secondary resources optimization.
- The Private Initiators intend to increase investments related to secondary resource use in the case of solid solutions.
- The intention is to share the lessons learnt in the cases with All Participants and Observers and even more widely with the objective of facilitating the movement of secondary resources within and eventually beyond the North Sea Region in Europe.

Total duration of the NSRR is five years: a maximum of 10 concrete cases of secondary resources streams will be tackled.

Results and impact

Currently there are 5 cases up and running. These cases deal with hard PVC recyclate, compost, bottom ash, struvite and ‘fast-track’ procedures for Weee

1. There is a problem analysis for each case/resources stream
2. Much information and knowledge has been shared between partners, leading to new insights
3. Possible solutions have been identified, explored, some have been implemented, others are still in work in progress
4. Several of the resources now have end-of-waste status in The Netherlands – lessening the administrative burden

Challenges and lessons learned

- Many of the perceived barriers are related to differences in the national interpretation and implementation of EU legislation
- Oftentimes solutions can be found within the existing legal framework
- International, multi-stakeholder cooperation requires time, cultural sensitivity, building of trust etc.
- Dealing with factual, concrete casus is a good way to get concrete insights and illustrations of (more general) problems

Potential for replication

Yes, this can be – and is being – replicated elsewhere. New participants can join the NSRR (f.e. Austria is a partner for one specific case). France has a number of Green Deals, Flanders has a Green Deal on mobility. The EU Commission's Innovation Deals are also inspired by the Dutch Green Deals.

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<http://www.greendeals.nl/english/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcsdgFs85aw>

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