World Economic Forum Project on the Circular Economy to Include EcoDesign Pilot from CEPI

Paper will show the way for other materials in ecodesign

The World Economic Forum's project on the circular economy (Project MainStream) has chosen the Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) to contribute to one of the project's three pilots for advancing circular thinking.

"An excellent track record, the right mindset of wanting to continuously raise the bar and world class knowledge in recycling were the reasons for which Project MainStream chose the CEPI pilot as a contributor", says Johnson Yeh, Head of Circular Economy Initiatives at the World Economic Forum.

The pilot's objective is to consolidate existing pieces of design tools into a set of user-friendly, universal ecodesign rules for all value added elements of the paper and board value chain. The pilot, running from January 2015 for 12 months, intends to create a self-enforcing mechanism of speedy adoption of new ecodesign rules, thanks to commitments by businesses.

The World Economic Forum's Project MainStream was launched in January this year, during the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos. The project will enable annual savings of up to $10bn for the value chain, according to World Economic Forum estimations.

"Paper is a perfect place for Project MainStream to start, given paper's currently high recycling rate and complete infrastructure for recycling. By establishing proof-of-concept with ecodesign rules for paper, the same lesson can be applied to other materials," says Yeh.

Although originally 100% recyclable, paper is converted by many downstream industries adding auxiliary materials, such as tapes, adhesives and printing inks. These materials will later return to paper recycling mills when closing the loop, as they cannot be sorted from paper in the dry-sorting steps before they reach paper mills. "Simple ecodesign rules for paper products would give the essential guidance for designers and developers without limiting innovation and hampering the introduction of new techniques. This would be a system-level approach, identifying the root cause and preventing problems", says Jori Ringman, Sustainability Director at CEPI.

The goal of a circular economy is to move towards a resource efficient use of materials throughout the life cycle, beyond production and consumption. In a circular economy, collected waste and by-products become new raw materials. Whereas the European paper industry has already achieved very high recycling rates of 72%, a more systemic approach supported by ecodesign will allow further improvement of the performance in the sector. "Ecodesign could reduce the overall fibre need as well as improve the safe recycling of fibres, while improving opportunities for reusing water and by-streams of the paper and paperboard process in industrial symbiosis", says Ringman.

The proposed project is also linked to other global sustainability initiatives, notably Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and to Sound Material Management (SMM) policies.
CEPI aisbl - The Confederation of European Paper Industries
The Confederation of European Paper Industries (CEPI) is a Brussels-based non-profit organisation regrouping the European pulp and paper industry and championing industry’s achievements and the benefits of its products. Through its 18 member countries (17 European Union members plus Norway) CEPI represents some 515 pulp, paper and board producing companies across Europe, ranging from small and medium sized companies to multi-nationals, and 940 paper mills. Together they represent 23% of world production.

Website: http://www.cepi.org/

Video on the circular economy by CEPI: http://youtu.be/lt3aHXs7FYM

Project MainStream is a collaboration led by the World Economic Forum and Ellen MacArthur Foundation, with McKinsey & Company as knowledge partners: http://www.weforum.org/projects/circular-economy

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