

CE100 at Schloss Krickenbeck: two emerging themes?

No one can match the Ellen MacArthur Foundation for getting the most from a large gathering of corporate experts on sustainability and the circular economy. It helps of course that they use [superb venues](#) and French-inspired catering, but it is the forward-looking agenda that so often quickens the pace toward innovation and finding new business opportunities.

An EMF meeting is definitely not an occasion to wallow in regret over what's not right with the world. "Let's do something about it," is the culture at these fast-paced events.

On 17 April I joined the latest CE100 accelerator meeting near Dusseldorf. It was a chance to meet up with clients like Michelin, IBM and Lexmark but also to pick up on emergent themes. Plastics, textile and food waste issues are ever present at CE100, but this time I noted two new themes:



Theme 1: Interior air quality

Google presented on the theme of interior air quality. The (mostly youthful) Googlers were usually first up in the mornings for Tai Chi and jogging, yet still managed to be entertaining at the bar late into the evenings. Which perhaps is why the [published white paper](#) wasn't especially insightful; at least to European eyes. Yet the theme highlighted by Google is certainly troubling and has the potential to move quickly to be front-of-mind.

Google's presentation emphasised measured impacts on the cognitive performance of office workers located in recently fitted out office space. Poorer cognitive performance was correlated with the interior air quality - although causal pathways were largely unexamined.



Emissions of volatile organic compounds were highlighted, but so was exposure to a much wider range of compounds in new upholstery, carpets, coatings, furniture and equipment. It was suggested these were responsible, in aggregate, for poor indoor air quality and perhaps longer-term risks to health. As Americans spend around 90% of their time inside, it was easy to see why the authors felt it was time to take

steps to highlight the issue. And that's exactly what Google is doing – so expect this to become an agenda-setting theme in due course. After all, academic work has been quietly propelling this theme over the past five years; handled well, it will become a source of new business opportunities for companies offering lower-impact products.

Theme 2: Supply chains for a Circular Economy

This theme crystallised for me in the many discussions held over dinner and breakfast, though it was also, in hindsight, front-and-centre of some of the 'Spark' and 'CoProject' proposals from CE100 members such as **Orange**. If what I picked up is becoming normal amongst CE100 companies, there will be new business opportunities for those with products to sell that offer a credible - even accredited - circular economy story. **Apple's** decision to change its procurement policy to require a recycled content in plastics was much discussed. That decision had rippled along global supply chains. **Danone**, too, is changing its procurement plans. For years, environmentalists have campaigned for Green Public Procurement (GPP), suggesting that it could alter the direction of the whole economy. But GPP has not delivered. Instead, because public procurement is so tightly regulated, making such GPP changes merely opens the process to legal challenges. Profit sector procurement, on the other hand, can be changed quickly and effectively.



When Apple, Orange or Danone reset the objectives of their supply chains, expect many new opportunities to arise. There was a buzz in the air asking which CE100 companies might go next? I think I have at least one answer – but I am not sharing it here!

Next steps

The next meeting of the CE100 accelerator will be in Lisbon in November. Dust off those [Nike](#) running shoes and start preparing.

by David Fitzsimons, Director of the Conseil Européen de Remanufacture

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About the Conseil Européen de Remanufacture:

The vision of the European Remanufacturing Council is to triple the value of Europe's remanufacturing sector to €100 billion by 2030. We will bring together businesses from every product sector to share knowledge, and seek changes to policy with the aim of making remanufacturing a normal part of the product life cycle.

The CER is an affiliate member of the CE100 of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.



For more information about the CER please visit www.remancouncil.eu

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Oakdene Hollins is a research and consulting business that advises clients on the circular economy and product stewardship. From offices in the UK and Brussels we provide market research and science-based evidence for Government and business clients. The company has managed European knowledge centres on remanufacturing (see www.remanufacturing.org.uk and www.remanufacturing.eu) and established the European Council for Remanufacturing based in Brussels. Oakdene Hollins also manages the award of the European Ecolabel within the UK to companies applying to sell their products within the European single market (see www.eu-ecolabel.uk).

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