

Circular Economy Solutions Dialogues (CESD) 2023

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)

From Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) to Ultimate Producer Responsibility (UPR): A Concept Goes Global.

Introduction

The Circular Economy Solutions Dialogues (CESD) “Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)” dialogue stream explored the global evolution of EPR concepts and practices.

The CESD were designed as a four-month multi-stakeholder / multi-country dialogues, comprising of four virtual meetings that employed a mix of dialogue methodologies and leadership impulses, and e-collaboration to identify, draw out and co-create ideas in between via GIZ’s [Green Tech Knowledge Hub](#).

Participants included policy makers, businesses, civil society, academia, think tanks and international organisations. The dialogues took place on 18 October 2023, 15 November 2023, 6 December 2023 and 17 January 2024.

Session Highlights

Session #1: Global Conversation on EPR

Focused on the global status and challenges of EPR, sharing experiences from different countries on implementing EPR strategies and systems. Key discussions included evaluating global EPR advancement, identifying challenges, and discussing future transformations.

Session #2: Designing Successful EPR Strategies

Discussed policy, legal, and regulatory requirements essential for EPR systems, highlighting insights from Kenya and Ghana on their EPR developments. The session underscored the importance of a robust policy and legal framework, stakeholder collaboration, and the pivotal role of manufacturers in driving EPR initiatives.

Session #3: Alternative Models to EPR Systems

Explored Deposit Return Systems, Extended Circular Ownership, and Ultimate Producer Responsibility as innovative approaches to improve EPR systems. The session emphasized the need for broader perspectives on EPR, focusing not just on recycling and collection but also on waste prevention and the inclusion of various stakeholders in the process.

Session #4: Financing EPR Frameworks

Aimed at addressing the financial aspects of EPR systems, discussing how efficient EPR implementations can close financial gaps in waste management, especially in low- and middle-income countries. The session highlighted the role of Producer Responsibility Organizations (PROs), the challenges of implementing EPR in diverse economic contexts, and the potential for EPR to finance a significant portion of waste management.

Conclusion

The “Extended Producer Responsibility” CESD sessions provided a comprehensive overview of the current landscape and future potential of EPR and related frameworks like UPR. Through collaborative discussions and the exchange of best practices, participants revealed the need for innovative approaches, robust policy support, and financial models to advance the circular economy. The dialogues highlighted the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement and the critical role of policy and regulation in ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of EPR systems globally. The CESD sessions set the stage for continued dialogue and action towards integrating circular economy principles across industries and regions.

Summary: Results of the CESD on EPR

Overview and Evolution of EPR

- EPR strategies have diversified globally over the past 20 years, expanding from a European focus to encompass both advanced and emerging economies.
- EPR has effectively enhanced collection and recycling rates across various resource types.
- The debate between industry-led and government-led EPR remained unresolved, with divided opinions among participants.

Core Objectives and Effectiveness

- EPR aims to redirect costs associated with growing municipal waste, enhance waste separation and material recovery, and incentivize recyclable product design.
- Its effectiveness is well documented in OECD countries, but evidence is lacking in many developing economies.
- Concerns have been raised about expanding EPR's scope beyond material recovery and recycling without sufficient prior knowledge or experience.

Collaboration and Strategy

- The importance of collaboration between multinational companies, local private and public sectors, and adapting EPR to local contexts is emphasized.
- The need for a strong and credible regulatory push for EPR's global effectiveness is acknowledged.
- It's recommended to start with simple EPR systems, achieve success, and then gradually introduce complexity.

Challenges in EPR Implementation

- EPR faces challenges in achieving cost-effectiveness, managing competition among producer responsibility organizations, and addressing free riding.
- Other challenges include supply chain complexities, regulatory deficiencies, the surge in online sales, and shifting product design priorities towards waste prevention.
- Political willingness, system complexity, and the need for public-private partnerships are crucial for EPR success.

EPR Deployment

- A comprehensive understanding of the regulatory framework and clear regulations are crucial.
- Stakeholder collaboration is needed for fair and uniform EPR application.
- Acknowledge the limitations of EPR schemes at the strategy and regulation design stage.
- Prevent lock-in effects and target higher waste management goals.
- Recognize the national-level value chain and waste production.

- Align EPR fees with the real economy.
- Develop an EPR culture linking industries and governments.
- Address behavioral change among citizens and within companies.
- Engage multinationals in local environmental initiatives.

EPR as a Flexible System

- EPR should be adapted to local settings, particularly in countries with strong, informal waste collection sectors.
- Understand cultural obstacles and consumer habits that may hinder EPR implementation.
- Recognize the need for regulatory push, funding, and a complete overhaul of accounting systems.
- Consider greenhouse gas emissions and shift bilateral dialogues towards circular economy models.
- Improve alignment and communication between public, private actors, and individual sectors.

Future Directions

- Forming a knowledge community, sharing best practices, motivating political figures, advancing research, and offering technical support are key actions for the foreseeable future.
- Shift from designing products for growth to designing for durability and circularity.
- Consider waste management - or better resource management - outside national jurisdictions, value addition beyond producers, social and ecological justice, transparency, and ethical considerations.

Future steps

In spring, a new [CESD on Organic Waste](#) will start. You can register [here](#).