

# Is circularity possible in the sector of electronics?

Workshop | C-SERVEES  
17th Symposium on Waste Management and Landfilling  
Forte Village, Sardinia, 1-4 October 2019

The audience discussed the central question, “Is circularity possible in the electronics sector?” There were seven symposium delegates in the room.

## Speakers

- Enrique Moliner | AIMPLAS
- Bernd Kopacek | SAT
- Patrick Carminati | Lexmark
- Pascal Leroy | WEEE Forum | Moderator

The moderator introduces the main elements and actors in the discussion around Circular Economy Business Models

- Price signals and the market
- Consumers
- Design | Producers
- Business models | Producers
- Legislation | Policymakers
- Technology
- Reuse

Electronics are consumer items that are becoming less expensive. The low-price seems to work against a leasing model and against consumers considering the items as long-term purchases. The limitation for leasing models may not be only the price, but the combination of price and regularity of purchase.

A short product lifespan is a good argument for leasing, in most cases. There are examples of leasing models in consumer goods that are well established.

A chicken and egg sort of story was discussed: people do not show interest in lease options because there is a lack of offers from providers or is there a lack of offer from providers because people do not see interest. Car example was mentioned to illustrate that: it is now more and more common to lease while a decade ago people were reluctant and it seems that all started with offers from car makers.

Consumers typically do not discount for total lifetime cost of a product. They only see the one-off costs. Also, they are still buying items for the prestige of ownership as well as for the service it provides.

Why not test the deposit return incentive in a demo?

LED lamps is a counter example of the general principle that the lower the cost, the lower the incentive for eco-design.

Consumers are motivated by durability, in principle, but that doesn't hold for all product categories. The same holds for repair potential; consumers are keen to have the option to repair certain products, but not necessarily all types of products.

For certain products, it makes no sense to make them more durable, e.g. ADVA telecom equipment. This is called functional obsolescence. Software is another issue related to obsolescence.

Strong return schemes can stimulate return of products.

Leasing may give rise to reticence among consumers when an element of the product is not covered by the leasing contract.

Tax is still on labour and not on raw materials, this works against CE.

There is legislation, but, often more importantly, there is the need to have good enforcement as well as fiscal incentives and price signals. There is also a need for stronger policy to drive the adoption of CEBMs.

Design is one of the main reasons for lack of CE in the sector. For example, in cases where repair becomes too expensive or impractical, the product becomes more easily obsolete.

The lifetime of software can often be an issue with EEE. This can stop working before the hardware stops working. Software is an issue in obsolescence.

There may be important difference between the survey answers and real actions of customers.

Education is a key driver for the transition to circular economy.

Specific questionnaire for government/legislators was missing in C-SERVEES (in WP1). The support of this stakeholder group will be targeted in WP6.