What 4 years of Circular Economy learning networks taught us

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After four years, we are taking stock of what we and the participating companies have learned from the CE Connect learning networks. What does such a learning network stand for? What topics were covered? What insights did we gain, what lessons did we learn?

In a first blog we have already talked about the experience of the participants of our learning networks. This part elaborates on the lessons learned from four years of CE Connect Learning Network.

On 17 November 2016, eight motivated, pioneering companies came together for the first time in the Agoria-Sirris Learning Network CE Connect. Meanwhile, 22 sessions have passed, and we now have two complete learning networks, in which a total of about 30 companies can participate each year. Over the past four years, more than 40 experts from home and abroad have contributed. More than 30 practical cases have been presented, each one about a specific topic.

What a learning network stands for?

Despite the recent 'hype' around circular economy, there are no ready-made answers for implementing the principles of circular economy on the shop floor. Sirris and Agoria believe

companies can learn from each other's good and more difficult experiences.

In the learning network, a set group of **'like-minded' companies** meets four times in a period of one year. We prefer to organise these sessions at participating companies or companies that can present their case and link this to a company visit. We also encourage participants to keep in touch with each other in between sessions. Wherever useful, they can use each other as sounding boards when the need arises.

The topics we highlight, are the challenges experienced by the companies themselves.

Insights from four years of CE Connect

To list all the lessons learned from the past four years in this blog is, of course, impossible. A great many topics have been covered.

What are the **continuing hot topics** in the circular economy? Here is our top 5:

1. Circular product design and its relationship to revenue models. How to set up successful circular projects in a dominant linear economic model?
2. Marketing circular products and services. How can my company successfully sell our circular product or product-service combination?
3. Setting up cooperation in the value chain. How can I find my role in the circular chain and ensure that the cost-benefits are spread along the chain?
4. More recent, but becoming more important, is measuring progress. How does my product score in a circular context? How much progress is my organisation making in the circular transition?
5. From scaling up the circular (pilot) projects to realising structural turnover with circular products and services.

What are the **concrete operational challenges** that we keep seeing? This is our analysis:

- Financing circular projects. How can I get my circular product-service combination financed?
- Digital technology and the circular economy. How can I make the most of digital technology to realise my circular ambitions?
- Laws and regulations, and the circular economy. How to deal with the risks associated with both emerging laws and regulations and 'old' linear regulations when realising my circular activities.

The top 10 **most important insights** from four years of learning networks CE Connect in a row:

1. Let customer needs be your starting point. Solve customer problems with a circular offer. Get out there and be humble. https://www.sirris.be/en/inspiration/get-out-there-and-be-humble-strange-keys-circular-success
2. Setting up product-service combinations in practice, a matter of trust. https://www.sirris.be/en/inspiration/setting-product-service-combinations-practice-matter-trust
3. A circular strategy for your business does not exist. It does exist for a specific product group and customer segment. https://www.sirris.be/nl/inspiratie/robuust-en-veerkrachtig-door-circulaire-aanpak
4. A new business model also brings with it different competences and even a different business organisation. https://www.sirris.be/nl/inspiratie/zo-maakt-u-uw-organisatie-klaar-voor-uw-circulaire-ambities

5. Many legal barriers have already been resolved. https://www.sirris.be/nl/inspiratie/juridische-drempels-bij-circulair-ondernemen-feit-fictie
6. Return logistics make or break your circular business case. https://www.sirris.be/nl/inspiratie/efficiente-retourlogistiek-maakt-kraakt-uw-circulaire-businesscase
7. When alone, you are turning in circles. Collaboration is the new normality. https://www.sirris.be/nl/inspiratie/samenwerking-aan-de-basis-van-circulair-ondernemen
8. Technology alone will not build a circular model. https://www.sirris.be/nl/inspiratie/circulaire-innovatie-met-technologie-alleen-red-je-het-niet
9. Product design is the key, but there are pitfalls. https://www.sirris.be/nl/inspiratie/ecodesign-de-sleutel-tot-de-circulaire-economie
10. Product design and service design are inseparable and contribute to the distribution of costs and benefits throughout the chain. https://www.sirris.be/en/inspiration/veldeman-bedding-brings-circular-design-practice

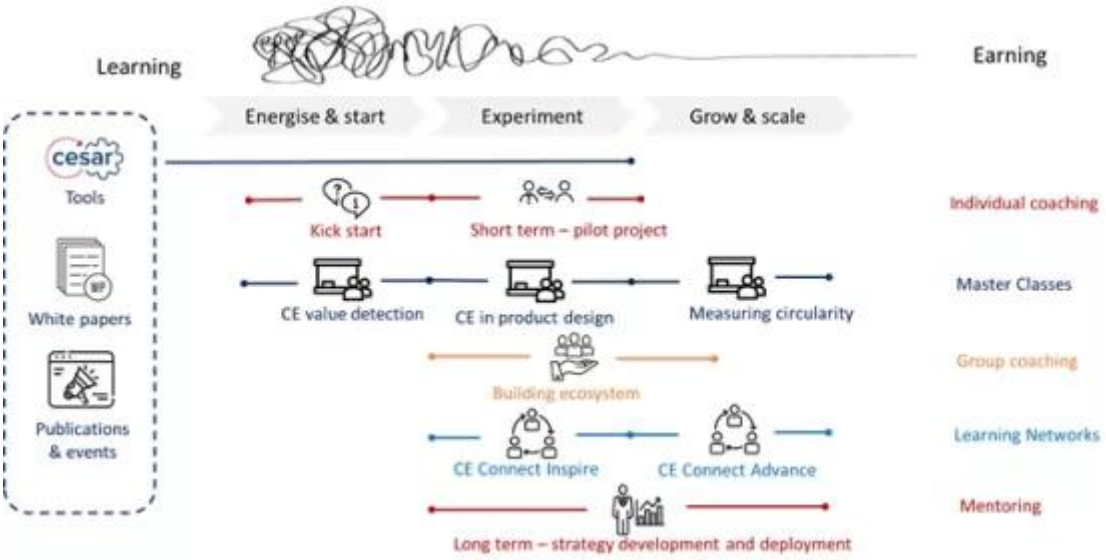
The key insights are also included in the **Cesar Tool** that you can use to identify circular opportunities for your business.

The annual joining time has come...

We are planning an annual accession point, where, based on an intake interview, we will determine which learning network would be most valuable and identify the intended challenges, topics and desired working methods.

Interested to participate? Contact us and we will schedule an intake, giving you priority over pre-registration. We are convinced that we will see many breakthroughs in the circular landscape in the coming year. Make sure one of them is with you. *The time is now!*

Not sure if a learning network is the format best suited to your organisation at the moment? Don't worry, there is certainly a format that fits your needs. We will be happy to go over the possibilities offered by Sirris and Agoria, as well as by third parties, with you and find out together how you can make concrete progress as quickly as possible.



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