

Collaboration as a lever for circular innovation in a ReX context

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How conTeyor & Ryhove experiment at the living lab Remanumaat in giving packaging a new lease of life

What do you do with reusable packaging when the product it was made for is no longer in use? Recycling often seems like the only answer, but there is an alternative. At the living lab Remanumaat, conTeyor and Ryhove explored how they could leverage each other's strengths through ReX (reuse, repair, refurbish, remanufacturing). Their experiences provide valuable lessons in **how circular collaboration between manufacturers and sheltered workshops can yield new insights into processes, design and strategy.**

Why conTeyor opted for ReX

For conTeyor, a developer of specialised packaging for high-quality components, recycling discarded packaging was standard practice. But that no longer felt right. The packaging is often still in excellent condition, and customers are increasingly demanding circular solutions that align with goals such as zero waste by 2025.

conTeyor wanted to take a different approach. In ReX – reuse, repair, refurbish, and remanufacturing – it saw opportunities to retain more value while simultaneously reducing its ecological footprint. However, this required a different way of working, as the existing production lines are designed for new production, not reprocessing.

This is where sheltered workshop Ryhove came into the picture. It already had experience of product assembly for conTeyor and possessed the skills and motivation to carry out activities focusing on extending product lifespans.

The project also presented Ryhove with an opportunity to offer its target group employees socially and economically valuable work. Preparation for reuse seemed like a perfect match.

Obstacles and solutions: circular collaboration in practice

Setting up systematic collaboration proved challenging. Both companies grappled with questions such as: How large is the input? How do we allocate costs and benefits? Who takes which risks? Ryhove was willing to invest in tools, but only if there was a real prospect that the partnership would continue.

At Remanumaat, an initiative from Sirris, the partners found a safe environment for experimenting with circular collaboration and drawing lessons about the approach, product design and so on.



What Ryhove learned from this circular collaboration

For Ryhove, the process was particularly valuable. Working with conTeyor and other partners gave it a better understanding of the complexity, challenges and opportunities of ReX for a sheltered workshop.

During the process, it became clear that Ryhove’s strengths, including flexibility, high-quality repetitive work and available capacity, are ideal within circular business models. **Prerequisite: clear agreements on processes, expectations and collaboration.** Ryhove drew valuable lessons of a strategic, operational and organisational nature from this process.

The safe environment of Sirris's Remanumaat living lab helped clarify the conditions needed for successful collaboration and identify potential pitfalls such as uncertainty, variability and mutual expectations more clearly. Under Sirris's guidance, the approach offered a structured and iterative way of working together that incorporated practical experiments, evaluations and adjustments. Ryhove therefore plans to carry on using this approach internally. It will make it possible to take a proper decision sooner on whether to pursue a project: is there sufficient prospect of long-term collaboration, or should the project be discontinued? This clarity is crucial for all parties.

Using this approach, Ryhove aims to strengthen its role in the circular economy while continuing to give its target group employees work in socially relevant and future-oriented activities. With the benefit of these insights, it is now actively seeking new opportunities to further explore and develop ReX concepts in collaboration with other partners in the manufacturing sector.

What conTeyor learned from this circular project

The partnership also yielded valuable insights for conTeyor, a specialist in reusable packaging. For example, it realised that packaging needs to be reusable nowadays, not just returnable. This shift makes it clear that design for reusability is very important – not just from an ecological perspective, but from an economic one.

To achieve this ambition, conTeyor is focusing heavily on ecodesign: developing packaging with a view to its entire lifecycle. This means that it must be durable, repairable, easy to take apart (so that reuse is profitable) and recyclable.

Most of conTeyor's customers are in the automotive sector. They place a strong emphasis on the sustainability of the vehicles themselves, but less so on the sustainability and reusability of the packaging. This is precisely why conTeyor wants to show customers that circular options exist: by working with external parties (such as sheltered workshops), they can design packaging that can actually be returned and reused. In this way, conTeyor is helping create **sustainable and efficient supply chains**.

The first steps have now been taken to develop a take-back programme, in which conTeyor is responsible for the entire lifecycle of the products it markets.

Collaborating on ReX: feasible and scalable

As they gradually developed a ReX concept together that took both strategic and operational considerations into account, trust between the partners grew. Above all, though, the process clearly demonstrates that as well as being desirable, working together on circular solutions is also feasible and scalable. There is great value in learning, experimenting and exploring potential together. This example demonstrates that the circular economy only works properly when manufacturers and sheltered workshops are prepared to share ideas. conTeyor and Ryhove have already taken an inspiring first step.

Circular collaboration within Remanumaat

The Remanumaat living lab is a Sirris initiative that encourages collaboration between manufacturers and sheltered workshops with a view to product lifespan extension and repurposing by means of various ReX strategies. Manufacturers often lack the manual processes that these strategies require – unlike sheltered workshops. Even so, the parties will frequently encounter problems relating to matters such as liability, revenue models and trust.

Sirris addresses these challenges. At Remanumaat, we develop and test concrete solutions, supported by technology and adapted collaboration models. The reusable packaging pilot project with conTeyor and Ryhove is an example of this. This approach is now being rolled out to five other ecosystems with high ReX potential, leveraging the circular transition in the manufacturing industry.

Are you interested in circular collaboration involving ReX?

Are you considering a ReX-based collaboration with a manufacturer or sheltered workshop? Contact one of our experts.

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Your company could be one of the next five Remanumaat case studies!

Would you like to read more about circular strategies in the manufacturing industry?

Remanumaat: collaboration for circular strategies
All about ReX strategies

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