ECOPRENEUR.EU
EUROPEAN SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS FEDERATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2017
EDITORIAL

Circular economy, mitigating climate change, raising awareness of the values sustainable businesses bring to society, economy and environment – Ecopreneur.eu and its members have been fully engaged to bring those topics forward and to set the path for the implementation of systemic change.

On EU level, we published several position papers on policy measures needed for sustainable businesses to strive; for instance, Ecopreneur.eu called for amendment of the EU VAT Directive 2006/112/EC to allow a low VAT rate for circular goods and services. In May, we published a “Business Manifesto: Companies call upon the G20 to seize the circular economy momentum”.

The perspectives and expectations of sustainable businesses of Europe were presented at CoR ENVE Commission’s debate in September on “Reflecting on the future of Europe – the environmental dimension”, chaired by Francesco Pigliaru (IT/PES).

And last but not least, we are very proud that Ecopreneur.eu was appointed as part of Coordination Group of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform.

Enjoy reading our annual report 2017.

Your sincerely,

Juliane Reiber
Managing Director
February 2017

In close cooperation with Ecopreneur.eu, UnternehmensGrün e.V. developed a Handout for Green Start-ups. The handout was part of the project “Greening Europe’s Economy 2016” which was financially supported by the German Federal Environment Agency (UBA) with funds of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (BMUB). "What are the drivers and motives of eco-entrepreneurs? What are the challenges sustainable start-ups face? What are the right instruments for them to succeed? Green entrepreneurs were asked these and other questions in a survey on the European Green Economy. It was carried out by UnternehmensGrün e.V. in close cooperation with Ecopreneur. Participants came from seven European countries across sectors and with different levels of company maturity. The most interesting results of the survey can now be read in the handout.

European Ideas lab: Participation + Workshop in Brussels
The European Ideas Lab, held in Brussels on February 3-5, 2017, was a huge success. Changemakers from across Europe came to meet Members of the European Green Party to exchange ideas, discuss current problems, and most importantly, find solutions for a more just and responsible society in Europe. Arthur ten Wolde, circular economy expert of De Groene Zaak and Juliane Reiber, managing director of Ecopreneur.eu held an interactive workshop on the current state of Circular Economy.

March 2017

Ecopreneur.eu: Adequate amendment of the EU VAT directive important to boost the circular economy
Ecopreneur.eu, the European Sustainable Business Federation, called for amendment of the EU VAT Directive 2006/112/EC to allow a low VAT rate for circular goods and services. To boost the circular economy, Ecopreneur.eu calls for economy-wide tax measures including a tax shift from labour to resources and differentiated value-added tax (VAT) rates to boost the circular economy. In view of the Open Consultation on amending the VAT Directive, this position paper focused on the VAT. If adequately used, value added tax can strengthen the circular economy by transferring clear prices signals to consumers and producers throughout the supply chain.
Debate about the future of circular economy policy at Circular Economy Stakeholder Conference:
At this annual event in Brussels, Máté Kriza (Foundation for Circular Economy) and Arthur ten Wolde were panelists at the European Economic and Social Committee. The meeting laid the basis for the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform launched in November (see below).

Conference on Circular Economy (15.03.2017): At this multi-stakeholder conference in Seville (Spain), organized by Seville City Council and the Spanish Federation of Local Authorities, Luis Morales (ECOVE and Board of Ecopreneur.eu) participated incorporating the voice of sustainable SMEs and green entrepreneurs.

April 2017

Eurodistrict Strasbourg-Ortenau: The beginning of a German-French networking project
Strasbourg, Paris, Berlin (11.04.2017): Representatives of the green economy in Germany and France agreed on cross-border cooperation. Starting now, sustainable businesses in the Upper Rhine region have the opportunity to exchange ideas in a networking project. The French sustainable business association Entreprendre Vert and the German federal association of the green economy UnternehmensGrün e.V., who are both members of Ecopreneur.eu, have jointly started a first cross-border project. Both organisations have already been working together on the European level in Brussels.

New Economy and Social Innovation Forum, Malaga: Workshop “Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation & Entrepreneurial Skills”
Malaga, Spain (19.-22. 04.2017): For four days in April the New Economy & Social Innovation Forum (NESI Forum), took place in Malaga, Spain. It was a gathering of sustainability representatives from all over the world to share and exchange knowledge, best-practice and skills. The Biodiversity Foundation of the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and the Environment organized a training workshop for Spanish aspiring entrepreneurs, bringing in the expertise of successful green enterprises to share their knowledge. Ecopreneur.eu was a partner in this activity. In cooperation with Ecopreneur.eu, the Biodiversity Foundation of the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and the Environment organized the workshop Sustainable Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation & Entrepreneurial Skills” for 30 selected participants. This activity was co-financed by the European Social Fund.
May 2017

**Business Manifesto: Companies call upon the G20 to seize the circular economy momentum**

Companies including multinationals and 2000 SMEs called upon the G20 to seize the “circular economy momentum” with measures to boost demand and transparency for circular products and services. The aim of our coalition was to encourage sustainable business practices, the efficient allocation of resources, and to unlock investments for circular innovation. Our companies have integrated circular economy principles such as the optimization of resource yields into their business strategies spanning the entire value chain in their different industrial sectors. It is the firm conviction of these companies that an essential driver for a thriving global economy is to move beyond the current "take, make and dispose economic model to a circular economy which is restorative and regenerative by design.

**International Congress on Climate Change**

ECOVE, Spanish member of Ecopreneur.eu participated actively in this international Congress that took place in Huelva, Spain (10-11.05.2017). It was organized and funded by the Regional Government of Andalusia. Over 300 researchers, activists, professionals, SMEs, corporations, NGOs and local authorities gathered to find solutions to tackle climate change.

**2nd Circular Change Conference, Ljubljana 11th May and Maribor 12th May**

The organization Circular Change is organizing the second International Circular Change Conference in Slovenia. The two-day event took place on the 11 May 2017. Participants shared practices, knowledges, experiences, but also failures and obstacles of their circular economy projects. The first day was be held in the capital, Ljubljana, and the second day in Maribor. Arthur ten Wolde, our circular economy expert, talked about challenges of the circular journey
July 2017

The second General Assembly of Ecopreneur.eu took place on July 4th, 2017 in Brussels
Participants from all member organizations (Grüne Wirtschaft (AT), Entreprendre Vert (F), UnternehmensGrün (D), De Groene Zaak (NL), Ecove (SP), SEA (Belgium) and Foundation For Circular Economy (HU) discussed organizational matters as well as future work topics such as ethical finance reform, eco-entrepreneurs in Europe and circular economy

Publishing of Annual Report 2016:
Overview of activities, developments, events of 2016.

September 2017

Reflecting on the future of Europe - the environmental dimension
On September 18th, 2017, Ecopreneur.eu was invited to the CoR ENVE Commission’s debate on “Reflecting on the future of Europe – the environmental dimension”, chaired by Francesco Pigliaru (IT/PES). President Marjolein Demmers gave an introductory statement outlining what leading sustainable businesses expect from Europe and their national, and regional governments. Businesses play a key role in the required transition towards a fair and sustainable economy, yet the framework conditions must be clear, more ambitious, and favourable for them to thrive. Best-practice examples and initiatives from several European countries show the way forward.

October 2017

The Ecopreneurs for the Climate at COP23 to raise ambitions through innovation, partnerships and networks
Since the historic COP21 in Paris in 2015, Ecopreneurs for the Climate has taken direct part in the annual UNFCCC Climate Summit (Conference of the Parties or "COP"), bringing the voice of climate championing ecopreneurs, city-level organizers and global partners to decision makers on the world stage. Eco4Clim makes a very specific and much-needed contribution to the climate movement gathering at the Summit each year: sustainable business solutions (ecopreneurs and green SMEs) to challenges deriving from climate change (mitigation and adaptation), with the Paris Agreement as the overarching framework and guiding torch, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, in particular #13 (climate action), #10 (reduced inequalities), and #11 (sustainable cities and communities).
November 2017

European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform - Ecopreneur.eu appointed as part of Coordination Group
Alyssa Jade McDonald-Bärzl, social entrepreneur and board member of Ecoopreneur.eu, was appointed as member of the Coordination Group of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform (CESP). The European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform will focus on three pillars: Policy dialogue (Pillar I), a coordination group bringing together circular economy-related stakeholders (networks, platform, universities, business organizations, Pillar 2) as well as a website as a virtual venue for dissemination of circular economy-related content (Pillar 3).

Anniversary UnternehmensGrün, November 23rd, 2017 in Berlin- Panel Discussion “Greening Europe’s Economy” at UnternehmensGrün 25th anniversary in Berlin

- Brussels Calling: Our Engagement in Brussels (Alyssa Jade McDonald-Bärzl, social entrepreneur and board member of Ecoopreneur.eu)
- Circular Economy Package – Update and political activities (Arthur ten Wolde, Ecopreneur/De Groene Zaak)
- Cradle-to-Cradle applied in praxis (Timothy Glaz, Werner&Mertz)

Towards the sustainability in Energy and the renewable future of cities
Renewable Foundation organized a multi-stakeholder conference in Madrid (30.11.2017) with representatives from public administrations, corporations, SMEs, entrepreneurs, NGOs and local authorities. Luis Morales, board member of Ecopreneur.eu and president of ECOVE, participated in the Conference.

Forum on Climate Change
Spanish political parties celebrated a 2-days Forum at the National Parliament in Madrid (14-15.12.2017) whose aim was to serve as a gathering with representatives from civil society, industries, SMEs and corporations to raise ideas and proposals for the National Law on Climate Change and Ecological Transition, which will be published in the first semester of 2018. ECOVE actively participated in the Forum along with other stakeholders from the environmental and green business field.