

**M&P Taskforce - A socially inclusive transition to a European  
circular economy - COP28 Event**

**5 December 2023**

Notes

Item	Speaker	Time (CEST)
<b>Welcome &amp; introduction to findings of the paper</b>	<b>Martin Porter</b>  Executive Chair, Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, Europe	<b>14:30-14:40</b>
<b>Reflections from the Materials and Products Taskforce</b>	<b>Sergio Menendez,</b> President for EMEA Region, CEMEX  <b>Maria Alegre</b> Global Stakeholder Relations Director, Ball Corporation	<b>14:40-14:55</b>
<b>Q&amp;A</b>	All	<b>14:55-15:00</b>
<b>Reflections from External Perspectives</b>	<b>Erin Leitheiser</b> Associate Director, Nature, BSR  <b>Diandra Ni Bhuachalla,</b> Youth Delegate, European Economic and Social Committee	<b>15:00-15:15</b>
<b>Q&amp;A</b>	All	<b>15:15-15:25</b>
<b>Concluding Remarks</b>	<b>Martin Porter</b>	<b>15:25-15:30</b>
<b>Close</b>		<b>15:30</b>

Agenda:

- 1. Welcome & introduction to findings of the paper, Martin Porter, Executive Chair**

**Martin Porter** introduces the new [Policy Briefing: Inclusive Circularity: Creating decent and fair jobs in the EU by the M&P Taskforce](#). Martin highlights the increasing importance of the circular economy, not just for climate goals but also for resource use and overall economic benefits. The focus is on the European context, with significant policy attention in recent years. The European Green Deal aims to establish conditions fostering greater circularity for various entities. Besides environmental benefits, it's emphasized that circular practices can enhance efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness, potentially creating over 700,000 new jobs in Europe by 2030. The new policy briefing aims to delve into aspects that haven't been thoroughly investigated in this context. Thus, improving the knowledge of businesses and policymakers about the relevance of the transition to a circular economy. This includes the opportunity to create new jobs for Europeans, and how to distribute the impacts and the social implications of this transition. The report provides several recommendations for policymakers to assess and design circular economy policies to ensure an equitable and inclusive transition, such as assessing the distributional impacts of an increased share of circular economy policies on the employment of all workers, including vulnerable workers, with gender disaggregated data, securing adequate financing of the transition towards a socially just circular economy and identifying the characteristics of a socially just circular economy and integrate these considerations into the monitoring of the impact of a circular economy, including employment.

**2. Reflections from the Materials and Products Taskforce, Sergio Menendez (President for EMEA Region, CEMEX) and Maria Alegre (Global Stakeholder Relations Director, Ball Corporation)**

Question from **Martin Porter**: Please introduce yourself and your company, and what is it that you are doing to advance circularity and why?

**Sergio Menendez**, who manages operations in CEMEX for the EMEA region, outlines the company's role in the circular economy. They annually co-process half of their sold volume, focusing on three circular streams: municipal solid waste (replacing fossil fuels), byproducts from their industry (like steel and aluminum), and construction demolition waste. Concrete, a major material, can be recycled indefinitely. This circular approach significantly lowers CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, particularly in replacing fossil fuels and reducing the need for new materials. Sergio emphasizes the industry's vital role in promoting a circular economy, and the positive environmental impact of their practices, such as avoiding landfill waste and reducing CO<sub>2</sub> footprint.

**Maria Alegre** highlights that in striving to meet ambitious targets, circularity is pivotal. These objectives include a 55% emissions reduction by 2030 across all scopes (1, 2, 3), achieving 85% recycled content. 75% of their emissions come from aluminium. For the production of recycled aluminium, only requires 5% to policies and regulations linked to singularity and recycling. This is facilitated by regulations like extended producer responsibility. Collaboration with suppliers and their suppliers further supports the shift to using more recycled aluminium. The ultimate aim is to achieve an 85% recycled content across all products globally by 2030.

Question from **Martin Porter**: what you think of the benefits of circularity for social purposes and what about the questions of vulnerable workers that need to be addressed?

**Sergio Menendez** states that thousands of higher-value jobs are emerging, particularly in engineering and waste management. Companies in specialized manufacturing fields are leading the way, creating hundreds of local jobs, including roles for brokers and drivers. The transition from fossil fuels to sustainable alternatives is still growing, offering employment opportunities that surpass traditional landfill jobs. Notably, the shift toward circular practices in construction and demolition waste presents around 30% of its total job potential. Initiatives, like producer responsibility in France, where concrete purchases include funding for demolition recovery, contribute to a significant, well-paid job ecosystem. This growth is especially pronounced in transport, processing, and manufacturing, introducing highly skilled positions that didn't previously exist.

**Maria Alegre** brings to the attention that Ball Corporation, a founding member of the Aluminium Initiative, aims to certify its products with ANSI standards for social and environmental sustainability. Advocating for recycling policies, they support deposit return schemes and extended producer responsibility. Emphasizing that these regulations incur no additional costs for governments, consumers pay a small fee for single-use packaging, refunded upon returning it. Unrecovered funds from unreturned packaging in deposit schemes could be used to create jobs in recycling and waste management. An example from Brazil showcases a 100% recycling rate achieved through waste pickers' efforts, emphasizing the potential for developing countries to learn and benefit from similar schemes and policies.

3. **Reflections from External Perspectives, Erin Leitheiser (Associate Director, Nature, BSR) and Diandra Ni Bhuachalla, Youth Delegate, European Economic and Social Committee**

Question from **Martin Porter**: Please introduce yourself and your company, and what is it that you are doing to advance circularity and why?

**Erin Leitheiser** is a faculty member at Copenhagen Business School, focusing on circular transition issues, particularly emphasizing social transition adjustments. Research indicates that as the system improves, there are emergent issues such as the impact on minimum wage and a decrease in the proportion of women working in the industry. In their work with a member network, they collaborate with large national companies on sustainability, including the just transition, aiding them in implementing changes. Their recent scoping efforts recognize challenges and the need to establish structures for sustained impact.

**Diandra Ni Bruachalla** is a Youth delegate on the European Economic and Social Committee, representing civil society in the European Union. Their role involves bringing the youth perspective and opportunities related to climate change to the committee. Diandra affirms that the presented paper was great. Moreover, they recently presented two position papers at COP, addressing agriculture and food security, and the just transition work programme. As civil society, they collaborate with the European Commission to influence negotiations, particularly emphasizing the social dimension of a just transition, including capacity building. It's encouraging to them to witness the alignment of civil society and business interests in addressing common issues. They appreciate the revaluation of mechanisms, such as the deposit return scheme, focusing on effectiveness and job creation, as highlighted by Maria.

**Diandra** ask a question to the panellists: I was wondering about how many people are unaware of initiatives like these. Considering the job possibilities, especially for young people, awareness could influence their interest in applying to companies like yours. Young people, particularly those informed about climate issues, might be more inclined to proactively engage if they were better informed about such initiatives. How do you think increasing awareness could impact the engagement of young individuals in these efforts?

**Martin** extends the question, saying that disseminating also links to data, he asks if speakers are collecting data that enables them to assess the extent to which there are these groups, agenda, categories either current or potential employee that are going to be advantaged or potentially disadvantaged in this transition?

**Maria** answers that beyond their public affairs advocacy, they actively engage in coalitions like 'Every Can Counts' to raise public awareness about the value of aluminum recycling, emphasizing its benefits for employment, sustainability, and climate change. They collaborate across the industry, suppliers, and competitors. And they are calling for policy support, recycling targets, and robust data generation for effective implementation and improvement of recycling systems globally.

**Question from Martin Porter:** what are your reflections on the inclusivity questions that public policy needs to help answer?

**Diandra** mentions that young people face challenges in staying informed about policymakers' actions, hindering their ability to engage effectively. Therefore, transparency is key. Furthermore. The lack of education on concepts like the circular economy further complicates active citizenship. Clear definitions and characteristics are crucial, as terms are often used interchangeably, making it difficult for both youth and policymakers to align on goals and priorities

**Question from Martin Porter:** The report seeks to build on the terminology that is already existing and to better categorise and define the types of employment and employee that are doing certain types of job associated with circular economic activities. There are core and they are enabling and then impacted workers, each of whom may feel a slightly different effects essentially, from the greater move to sector of the economy activities. But maybe if we build on that, then you've heard a couple of points about what government needs to or could do to support this. Do you want to comment on whether they sound accurate to you? and whether this question on the on the social dimension around level playing field and de-risking. Are there other ones in relation to inclusivity or the social dimension that need to be joined up, if not developed?

**Sergio** mentions that in practical terms, implementing regulations, like those related to municipal solid waste and construction and demolition waste, has proven effective in creating new, higher-quality jobs. The vision of zero landfills in Europe aligns with waste directives, yet enforcement varies across countries. Proper enforcement not only addresses illegal waste disposal but also fosters a formalized economy, generating a comprehensive ecosystem of employment opportunities. Successful examples in some European countries contrast with challenges in emerging markets like Mexico, Colombia, the Philippines, and Egypt, where efforts involve sharing European directives and regulations to establish similar business ecosystems and employment opportunities.

**Maria** highlights education is crucial, and a level playing field is essential in realizing the job opportunities offered by circularity. Beyond innovation and research, considering marginalized waste pickers is vital. Circular systems shouldn't merely rely on consumer behavior; they should empower

and support marginalized individuals, prevalent in both developing countries and Europe. Policymaking should consider existing mechanisms, leveraging them at minimal cost to the government for effective circularity that benefits all segments of society.

Question from **Martin Porter**: What are the lessons we can learn from this session and from this report?

**Maria** affirms that when talking about circularity, it is important to talk about all the dimensions that are involved in it. A systemic change is needed around every dimension of circularity, and considering the social dimension that circularity brings is key.

**Sergio** believes circularity offers many possibilities as opposed to the negative narrative around a green economy. They are glad to see the innovation that is happening now and reaffirm the need for everyone including governments, business, civil society to achieve the green transition.

**Erin** affirms that circularity is interconnectivity, not only about transforming the materials and the systems, but also the impact that it has on people and society. They are opportunities for society at large to create an inclusive system around circularity and this should be a key priority now.

**Diandra** highlights the importance of the issued paper and how great it is to see that businesses are taking into account social aspects of circularity.