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The solar energy sector as a model for the circular economy

This new innovative project will provide systemic circular business solutions applicable in different sectors supporting the energy transition

Recently, a new project financed by the Horizon2020 Program, CIRCUSOL, was announced to the public. Circusol's main objective is to promote the solar energy sector as a leading model in the circular economy through business models based on **Product-Service Systems (PSS).** In short, this project will provide new business models applicable in different sectors to support the energy transition.

In accordance with European policies, the transition to a more circular economy means that the value of products, materials and resources is maintained in the economy for as long as possible, and the generation of waste is minimized. The aim is to **achieve a sustainable economy, low in carbon, efficient in the use of resources and competitive**.

The solar sector can be a key model for this objective because, at present, **solar energy** generates almost 4% of the electricity demand in Europe. This is expected to continue to rise, driven by the 2020 binding national renewable targets and the recent solar tenders. In addition, according to *Solar Power Europe* studies, a **growth rate of 45% is foreseen for 2018 and 58% in 2019**. This projected growth is guided by the **EU objectives to achieve a 32% renewable energy by 2030**.

As the solar energy market increases, so will the volume of discarded products, moreover, The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) estimates **1.7 to 8 million tons of photovoltaic panel waste for 2030** and **60 to 78 million tons by 2050**, cumulatively.

This Horizon2020 project aims to validate its acceptance in the market, the commercial viability and its benefits, create a path of **reuse, restoration and remanufacturing**, in addition to recycling; and providing new value-added product services for residential, commercial and public end users. To visualize this theory, **five demonstrators** will be established in **three European countries** (France, Belgium and Switzerland).

On the other hand, it will offer **tangible innovations** for the solar industry with Product-Service business models, second-life PV certificates, business cases, an ICT platform to share and manage information and recommendations for those responsible for formulating policies. Likewise, they will also develop **circular innovation business** methodologies, for use by the industry, professionals in the field of sustainability and the academic sector.

The results of this project will help Europe promote efficiency in the use of resources and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

ZABALA Innovation Consulting will contribute to this project involving the stakeholders of the solar power sector, the end users and the European actors of the CIRCUSOL project through communication and dissemination strategies. Additionally, ZABALA Innovation Consulting will support the coordination and management of this project.

The Circusol consortium met in Brussels along with the representatives of the Executive Agency for Small and Medium Enterprises (EASME). All partners participated in a co-creation session with the aim of **understanding the role of the different stakeholders in the current value chains of PV and EV batteries**.

The Circusol consortium is made up of **five research centres** and universities, **nine industrial organizations** of PV and battery value chains, and **a consulting company** with a total budget of **€8,255,590** and an **EU contribution of €7,014,892.76**. Over the next four years, it will be implemented with the collaboration of 15 organizations from 7 European countries.

The project is led by VITO, a research centre established in Belgium. The other partners are: Lund University (Sweden), Bern University of Applied Science, (Switzerland), IMEC, (Belgium), Soli Tek R & D, UAB (Lithuania), SNAM (France), CEA Liten (France), Ecopower cvba (Belgium), PV CYCLE aisbl (Belgium), BKW Energie AG (Switzerland), Futech bvba (Belgium), SOREA (France) Daidalos Peutz (Belgium), ZABALA Innovation Consulting (Spain), Loser Chemie GmbH (Germany).

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