

BEvitalise

Revitalising the Belgian Circular Consumer: No Time to Waste Food, Nor Electronics

DURATION
01/09/2022 – 01/12/2024

BUDGET
89 983 €

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

BEvitalise aims to promote circular and climate-conscious consumption patterns through a better understanding of the way in which Belgian consumers make purchasing decisions. Belgium's continued transition to a circular economy has the potential to deliver important benefits – from reduced pressure on the environment, supply security, and increased competitiveness, innovation, and growth. Specifically, BEvitalise aims to promote and increase Belgian consumers' circular behaviour in the domains of reducing i) food waste, and ii) waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE). BEvitalise will do this by eliciting consumers' circular behaviour and preferences, with the final goal to involve members of the Belgian public in providing policy recommendations to encourage the continued shift to a circular economy.

Consumers have a vital role to play in this transition. Understanding the preferences underlying Belgian consumers' decision-processes is therefore key to transform the traditional economic model based on the 'take-make-consume-throw away' pattern. The way the market is currently structured means that information on the product is often lacking, inaccurate or misleading. BEvitalise will both reproduce and explore the methodology of two discrete choice experiments (DCEs). A DCE is a non-market valuation method based on repeated fictional choices made by respondents to elicit their preferences. While BEvitalise will replicate the methodology, it will also explore and contribute to the state-of-the-art literature by reducing hypothetical and social desirability bias in our practical applications of the methodology; both reducing uncertainty and increasing the realism of our results. BEvitalise will thus conduct two DCEs on Belgian consumers' preferences in the two aforementioned two domains: (1) minimising food waste, and (2) WEEE, which is the world's fastest-growing solid-waste stream.

While Belgium's three regions have used an effective mix of policy instruments to achieve prominent levels of recovery and recycling of municipal waste and other waste streams, a key challenge for all will be to reduce the volumes of materials consumed, as well as wasted. In line with the 21 targets of the Federal Circular Economy Roadmap (as well as Circular Flanders, Circular Wallonia, and the Brussels Regional Circular Economy Strategy), further awareness-raising efforts are needed to encourage circular behaviour to reuse, repair, refurbish and recycle existing materials and products.

Based on results achieved through BEvitalise, we will propose policy recommendations to better inform, incentivise and increase circular behaviour among Belgian consumers. In order to maximise the impact of the BEvitalise project, we propose a stakeholder-driven, valorisation approach including a post-project R&D strategy. All these elements are further explained in the paragraphs below. To this end, our project end results include the following:

- (1) in WP1, the stakeholder mapping and impact assessment will look to map policymakers, industry, financial institutions, experts, and NGOs, civil society organisations in order to obtain information concerning their interests and decision/policy making process so as to influence the Belgian transition to a circular economy in the fields of food and electronic waste.
- (2) two discrete choice experiments on consumers' preferences in the fields of food waste and waste electrical and electronic equipment are broadly disseminated within academia and beyond so that they can be of practical relevance to relevant stakeholders, practitioners, and policymakers.
- (3) Policy recommendations based on results of the experiments and stakeholder mapping assessment.



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The project results will further be presented in such a way that they aid policy decision-making and further product development. The knowledge developed during the project will be published in Web of Science top-ranked journals and be communicated to a non-academic audience by publishing in newsletters and blogs, and international news outlets. By attending conferences, both with an academic and policy focus, we will raise greater awareness of our work. We aim to reach people in the policymaking process who can use our project results to understand consumer behaviour, identify barriers to and opportunities for change, and in the end, better design policies which can trigger changes in behavior.

Once the project has come to an end, the results and research must continue to be deployed and explored. Due to the specific nature of this call (a short, 2-year project), we had to limit the amount of DCEs that will be performed. Therefore, in a post-project R&D trajectory, we will continue the work of BEvitalise, for instance, through the application of DCEs in other sectors in the circular economy in Belgium.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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LINKS