



Invitation to sponsor the circularwashing white paper

Vienna, May 2022

Dear Madam, dear Sir,

REVOLVE Circular and the SDG Hub are pleased to inform you about a new joint initiative:

#circularwashing

With this letter we would like to invite you to consider sponsoring the first concrete activity of this initiative, namely, to develop the first-ever white paper on circularwashing, presenting a robust first concept on 20-24 pages, complemented by annexes with case studies and other elements.

Why circularwashing, and what could it be?

Our observations related to the increasingly popular concept of a circular economy and, to a lesser extent, circular society, show that more and more non-profit and for-profit organizations use 'circular' terminology in very different ways and contexts. We also observe an emerging and quickly evolving phenomenon where some of these organizations seem to use such circular terminology for greenwashing purposes. Some authors already refer to this as #circularwashing.

In a world where climate change, scarcity of natural resources and skyrocketing prices of virgin raw materials are already a reality, an increasing number of political, business, and civil society leaders promote the transition to a circular economy as a solution, or at least a part thereof, for a more sustainable world. At the same time, gradually increasing legal and policy scrutiny, as well as consumer preferences for more sustainability call on companies to change their business models and incorporate sustainability - and circular economy - in their value creation and value propositions; this converts the 'circular economy' into a powerful component of marketing communication strategies.

What we plan to investigate

The absence of an officially recognised definition of what the circular economy is leads to a high level of vagueness, one of the 'seven sins of greenwashing' developed by marketing firm TerraChoice in 2009. Confusing the circular economy with more and better 'recycling' might be considered another of those seven sins, the 'sin of lesser of two evils' with *"'green' claims that may be true within the product category, but that risk distracting the consumer from the greater environmental impacts of the category as a whole."* Planned obsolescence of goods, misleading environmental claims, non-transparent and non-credible sustainability labels or sustainability information tools referred to as

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'circular' increasingly emerge as common practice - to what extent are these practices greenwashing or, more specifically, circularwashing? These are only some of the phenomena and questions we will investigate to develop a methodologically strong concept of what 'circularwashing' could be, as a basis for further investigations and activities.

The main output - the circularwashing white paper - shall inform all stakeholders and particularly companies, often slow in making fundamental changes in their business models and marketing strategies, about the risks of circularwashing and help them avoid false or generic circular economy claims in their external communications; these include sustainability reporting, advertisement, Press Releases, labelling and other PR, marketing, and corporate communication activities. REVOLVE Circular and the SDG Hub believe that such greenwashing in the circular economy is likely to adversely affect the pace of the green transition, fair competition, investment decisions and consumer choices as they are confronted with unfair commercial practices which, in turn, actively influence and prevent them from making sustainable choices.

Who will conduct the research and what it will be about

Four individuals have come together to conduct the research and develop the #circularwashing white paper: Sören Bauer, President of REVOLVE Circular, will lead and coordinate the project, and contribute research for the chapter on strategic environmental communication. The research on this very chapter will be led by Paulina Godinez Estrada, PhD researcher in communication sciences at the University of Vienna. Erik Roos Lindgreen, PhD in CE/sustainability assessment at the University of Messina, Italy, will lead the research on the business perspective and the implications of Life Cycle Assessments LCA. Katerina Serada, international lawyer, sustainability researcher and circular economy consultant will lead the research on competition law and the investor perspective. The findings of those chapters will form the basis of the initial draft concept of #circularwashing and its main characteristics and components.

Benefits for sponsors

There are two different options for sponsoring the research, development, presentation and dissemination of the white paper: Option I is a sponsorship opportunity of 5000 euro: the white paper will carry your organization's logo on the bottom of its front cover, include your organisation's 250 words testimonial (also in the global Press Release) and we will produce your one-minute video statement for websites and social media. The reduced option II is a sponsorship of 2 500 Euro: the white paper will carry your organisation's logo on the back cover and include a 250 words testimonial from your organisation. All sponsors will be mentioned in the introductory part of the white paper.

Your contribution will cover the team's research and its coordination, graphic design, production of video statements, global Press Release dissemination and webinars. Please consider that we will aim to grow #circularwashing into a global initiative with a continuously increasing number of sponsors and partners; this also means that we will very much welcome contributions higher than mentioned as Option I and II above and invite you to make direct contact with us for related discussions.

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Preliminary timeline

It is our objective to conduct and finalise the research as well as publish the white paper within half a year after successful fundraising. Research will start once we have secured a minimum of 25 000 Euro from different sponsors; we offer the opportunity to support our work with either 2500 or 5000 Euro. If we succeed in doing so by June 2022, a first draft white paper shall be ready for internal review by the end of September 2022. The final version will then be available in October 2022, and will be presented via a Global Press Release, proactively disseminated to all stakeholders and presented in November via a series of webinars.

Position yourself as a thought leader and join #circularwashing

We believe that our research and white paper will be of significance for communicators, investors, policymakers, lawyers, sustainability managers, consumer rights protection organizations, ESG specialists, marketing teams and others. It will provide thought leadership on the linear-to-circular narrative, how companies and others use and refer to the circular economy and how the public perceives it; as such, the white paper will lay the foundations for a multi-stakeholder **#circularwashing** initiative geared towards supporting various stakeholders in taking more informed decisions and contributing to the transition towards a more sustainable world.

We are grateful for your consideration of our invitation to join **#circularwashing** and will be pleased to send you a more detailed and complete 12-page research proposal incl. a more detailed tentative budget. For this purpose, we kindly ask you to send us the signed Non-Disclosure Agreement NDA further below which you can also request from Sören Bauer as a word file.

Thank you in advance and best regards from Vienna.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sören Bauer

President, REVOLVE Circular

Katarina Serada

SDG Hub

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Please include name of your organisation, name of representative, postal address and email address of the interested party and send the signed NDA to: soren@revolve.media

Non-Disclosure Agreement (“NDA”)

All information related to the presentation and possible participation / sponsoring regarding the abovementioned circularwashing white paper (“the project”) provided to the interested party is to be treated as strictly confidential.

The interested party agrees to keep confidential all information that comes to its knowledge in the course of the presentation of the project as well as all annexes that are part of the project concept. All information provided must not be disclosed in whole or in part to any third party or to make it available to third parties in any other form.

The interested party agrees not to use any of the information provided in any way whatsoever, for its own purposes or for any other purpose.

In case of breach of this NDA, such breaching party hereby undertakes to pay REVOLVE Circular and SDG Hub respectively, regardless fault, a contractual penalty in the amount of EUR 2500 for each single breach.

This NDA is governed by and construed in accordance with Austrian law.

All disputes arising out of this NDA or related to its validity, breach or violation, termination or nullity shall be finally settled under the Rules of Arbitration (Vienna Rules) of the Vienna International Arbitral Centre (VIAC) of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber in Vienna by one or three arbitrators appointed in accordance with these rules.

The place of arbitration shall be Vienna, Austria.

By signing, the interested party declares to have read and understood this NDA and undertakes to fully comply with the obligations of this NDA.

Signature / date / place

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