

Consumption | Individual communication

IC - (21061) - WASTE PREVENTION IN THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY: EXPLORING PRECYCLING BEHAVIOURS IN THE FINNISH CONTEXT

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Background and objectives

While the concept of circular economy (CE) has been gaining increasing momentum, it has also been criticized for excessive focus on recycling. At the same time, according to the European Union Waste Framework Directive, waste prevention and re-use are the most preferred options in the waste hierarchy, compared to recycling or energy recovery. In the context of everyday consumption, waste prevention is also described as “precycling”, that is any kind of behavioural strategies to minimize the amount of generated waste, including refusal of single-use items, reduction of overall consumption, reuse and repair of existing products, and invention of new uses for the materials. Our study aims to holistically explore the willingness of citizens in Finland to engage in waste prevention, or precycling in their everyday life. Compared to previous studies that have been looking into re-use and repair behaviours, we intend to adopt a wider perspective, by also including behaviours related to frugality and minimalism.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

Our study is a quantitative survey-based exploration (n=1000) in the Finnish context of the citizen views and motivations to engage in precycling, based on the set of the 4Rs in the CE (refuse, reduce, reuse and repair).

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

We examine what kind of precycling behaviors citizens are currently performing, compare their willingness to engage in different types of precycling, as well as delve into the skills and challenges experienced by citizens when implementing precycling. Precycling is still a relatively little-studied form of pro-environmental behavior, and our research sheds further light on this issue.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

The insights produced by our study have practical policy implications for strengthening the waste prevention principle put forward by the EU. Comparing the willingness to engage in different precycling behaviours and the associated skill sets, allows understanding which precycling behaviours call for more education and communication to support citizens in implementing waste prevention.

Palavras-chave : circular economy, precycling, citizens, waste prevention, re-use