

Call for PhD Applicants

Science for a sustainable transition of companies

The Free University of Brussels (Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Université Libre de Bruxelles) are searching for a PhD candidate to participate to a newly developed Chair in Circular Economy financed by the Federation of Belgian Enterprises.

Project

The PhD project will problematize the eclosion of Circular Economy (CE) configurations with respect to their multi-dimensional performances. Circular Economy initiatives in private companies show a rich diversity of business cases and industrial/commercial models by combining different mechanisms and concepts such as the 'reduce, reuse, recycle' nexus, the material cycling and material flow concepts, systems thinking, etc. Simultaneously, a subset of EC initiatives implements alternative economic models, e.g. cooperatives, platform economy, etc. Considering the current socio-political importance given to such EC initiatives in terms of the competitiveness of the business opportunities they develop, the present PhD project intends to question whether the vital sustainable systems thinking is operationalized by such EC initiatives.

The Phd project will contribute to the methodological and empirical development of multi-dimensional performance evaluations of EC-initiatives, in particular on two cases from different economic sectors: (a) Combining the mobility and energy sector by reusing 2nd life batteries in electric grid applications and (b) a case from the building sector. The elaboration of the multi-dimensionality of the framework is part of the PhD project, but could cover dimensions such as economic viability, commercial potential, innovative transformativity, environmental life-cycle performance, social acceptance...

Several tasks are defined and the theoretical stepwise approach can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Mapping of the material flows and stocks in economies
- (2) State of Art analysis
- (3) Typology of Circular Economy
- (4) Multi-dimensional sustainability assessment methodological framework
- (5) Case study selection and analysis
- (6) Transition pathways to sustainability

The Circular Economy Chair is managed and supported by an interdisciplinary consortium from VUB & ULB: Prof. Cathy Macharis (VUB), Dr. Maarten Messagie (VUB), Dr. Maitane Berecibar (VUB), Prof Wouter Achten (ULB), Prof. Tom Bauler (ULB), Prof Hubert Rahier (VUB) and Prof Ahmed Khan (ULB). The PhD candidate in particular will be promoted jointly by Cathy Macharis, Wouter Achten, Maarten Messagie and Ahmed Khan, and will induce a double VUB and ULB diploma.

Profile

You are a motivated junior early career researcher with a strong initial academic record and are keen to work independently on projects in a business-oriented environment. Preferably you have an initial expertise (e.g. Master thesis) in Circular Economy concepts and/or multi-dimensional assessments. You are a good communicator with a hands-on mentality ready to support the organization of workshops and seminars with companies and private innovation carriers.

You can communicate professionally in Dutch and French, and are not afraid of the omnipresence of English in the academic world.

Offer

You start as a full-time researcher on a 3-year contract affiliated both to the VUB and the ULB as early as autumn 2018 in a dynamic and stimulating working environment. You will be inserted in a wider research program, i.e. the Circular Economy Chair, which promises interesting opportunities and direct access to economic and industrial actors of the Belgian Circular Economy. You will be trained to become a fully independent researcher in a scientific field with a strong and promising future. We offer an attractive salary as well as extra-legal benefits such as free public transport and hospitalization insurance.

Interested?

Send us by 14th of September 2018 a motivation letter, an extensive CV and a copy of any earlier academic work (e.g. MA dissertation, working paper...) to :

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