



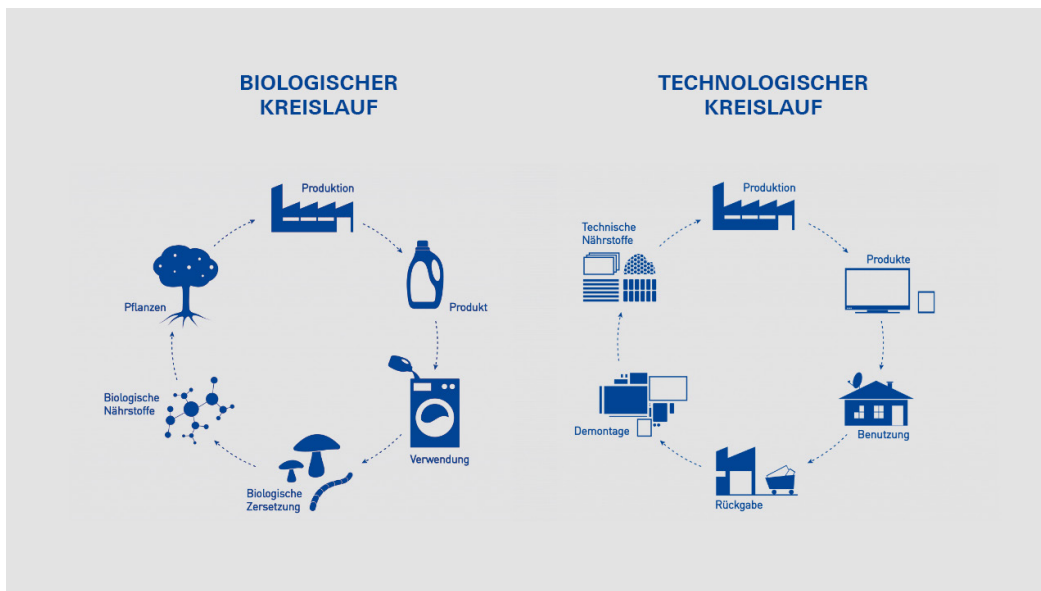
Circular economy in the printing industry

Since the European Union (EU) included the idea of a circular economy in its growth strategy, this topic has moved more into the public focus. Is the circular economy also something the printing industry needs to consider? Yes - and some companies have already adopted the idea and are successfully putting it into practice.

The EU's new circular economy package aims to use resources instead of depleting them further. The main cornerstones are the redevelopment of natural capital, the minimization or elimination of toxic substances and the avoidance of waste through a careful recycling process design. EU-wide targets such as recycling rates for household waste have been set. The aim is to recycle 65 percent of household waste by 2030. Those are the basic framework conditions. Each industry must, of course, develop its own strategy.

The paper and printing industry has done a lot in recent years to make print products more sustainable. Paper manufacturing, in particular, is increasingly sourcing pulp from sustainably managed forests, and the recycling rate in Europe has also risen to over 70 percent in recent years. In view of such figures, it might be fair to assume that this should be sufficient compared to other industries. And then there is also the possibility of buying certificates to make the emissions produced during production climate-neutral. Try doing the same with your car!





Source: epeaswitzerland.com

How nature would print

The circular economy as implemented, for example, under the [Cradle to Cradle](#) label, however, goes a step further. It requires all products to be designed in such a way that they are completely harmless to nature and people. In extreme cases, for example, a printed product can be returned to the biological cycle and would also be compostable. For certification, all parameters involved in the production process must be assessed by an independent institute. The components of the material used are analyzed at recipe level – and must be adapted by the supplier where necessary.

Embarking on the route to Cradle to Cradle certification requires not only a good deal of idealism but also perseverance. As a medium-sized printing house, persuading an international paper manufacturer to disclose its recipes is certainly not an easy task. And the assessment of all parameters by an independent institute can be quite costly for a single printing plant.

The Austrian eco-pioneer [gugler*](#) nevertheless rose to the challenges to become the first printing house in the world to be certified by Cradle to Cradle in 2011. „We print as nature would print and leave food for the soil. Our print products have been optimized for the recycling process so that the sludge produced can flow back into the biological cycle,” says Ernst Gugler, founder and Managing Director of the communications company.

What's special about it?

Cradle to Cradle is one of the most demanding certificates worldwide when it comes to ecological recycling management. However, the idea is not to simply rely on manufacturers' declarations that no prohibited substances are contained in a product, while nobody knows exactly which substances are still contained in the products and what toxicological effects they have. This is why disclosing suppliers' recipes is so important. „Given the maze of eco-labels available, we want to give customers a sense of certainty in their decision-making,” says Gugler.

Print The Change Community

In order to spread the certification costs across several parties and to promote close international cooperation in research, [gugler*](#) established the Print The Change Community in 2015. The Swiss printing house [Vögel](#) and Denmark's [KLS](#) are currently working with [gugler*](#) on enhancing [Cradle to Cradle](#).



More and more customers are recognizing the signs of the times and opting for ecological print products: McDonald's in Denmark, for example, has discovered Cradle to Cradle for the food sector and is using KLS for its printing needs. Book publishers are also setting the course to go green. The Kosmos publishing company is having its own children's book series „Who are you?“ printed in [Cradle to Cradle](#). And the Random publishing house has also recently been added to the [gugler*](#) customer list.

Circular economy in other sectors

There are already thousands of certified products worldwide from all areas: office chairs, toilet paper, cleaning agents, sneakers or seat covers for aircraft or car seats. The textile manufacturer Woford, for example, has launched sweaters and tights produced in Cradle to Cradle. It goes without saying that the packaging was also printed in Cradle to Cradle quality in order to create a consistent, coherent brand image. By 2025, 50 percent of all Woford products will be recyclable.

„Cradle to Cradle isn't just a marketing ploy. Since we have access to a complete value-added chain in our region, this principle can also be implemented,“ says Andreas Röhrich, Director of Product Development & Innovation at Woford AG. Packaging plays a major role and is indispensable for the credibility of sustainable products.

On the consumer side, things have started to move and demand for sustainably made products is constantly increasing. Complete consistency in production, packaging and communication is expected. Cradle to Cradle is an approach to further underpin its sustainability efforts in the marketplace.

You can find more information here: printthechange.com

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