

If you have missed the 17th EuPIAs annual conference, this will be your short update. Increased sustainability and digitalisation are transforming the economy and are at the heart of political initiatives such as the EU Green Deal. All the more reason to dedicate the annual conference to these twin challenges. EuPIAs first virtual conference has been insightful, but participants clearly missed the in-person meetings and quickly renewed the promise to meet in Budapest in 2022.

Peyman GHANDCHI (Nystio) started by offering the brand owners perspective on the circular economy. He reported that European consumers have become highly sensitive to environmental issues. While Brand owners are facing increasingly pressure to conform with sustainability and circular economy principles, Mr. Ghandchi noted that the pressure moves towards the back-end of the value chain for immediate actions. Certainly, the whole value chain will add to the packaging of the future. At the moment, the technical innovation is focussing on recycling and recycled content and new materials, but also on new business models and value propositions. Mr. Ghandchi concluded that the Circular Economy is reshaping the competitive landscape through the whole value chain.

Mr. Henrik Beha Pedersen (PlasticChange) impressively showed why there is a need for action to reduce plastic waste and to increase sustainability. Motivated from having seen plastic waste all along his boat trip around the world, he also demonstrated with a polluted beach picture from Denmark that the issue has arrived in the European backyard. Finding that prevention up-stream is better than cleaning up, he called for a reduction of packaging, especially to eliminate problematic and unnecessary packaging, and to rely on reuse models. Promising to bring about change is the global commitment charter that has been signed by 250+ organisations who pledge to on principle to further eliminate, circulate and innovate on packaging.

Öystein Aksnes (Stora Enso) made the case that plastics could be replaced by fiber based solutions already today. With € 8,6 billion sales and about 23000 employees, Stora Enso is a leading provider of renewable solutions in packaging, biomaterials, wooden constructions and paper globally. With a long experience in circular solutions, Stora Enso is in a unique position to drive the transition to a circular economy and welcomes further cooperation projects with the printing ink industry.

Learning from Dr. Tilman Buchner (Boston Consulting Group) about the digitalisation, it came with no surprise that there is more to it than meeting virtually. In his presentation he demonstrated today's digital solutions for business efficiency (drone inspection of wind turbines and agriculture fields) and made the point that we live in the age of acceleration considering available information and instant global reach.

Driving the digitalisation are the hyper scalers (Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook) that have erected data centres around the world that are connected by glass fibre cables through the oceans which form what is called the 'cloud'. To further advance into the era of the industrial internet of things much more processing power and edge computing is needed to cope with the ever-growing amount of data. Edge computing is a technology where data is processed decentral in the network periphery -

at the location where it was generated (instead of in the data centres) and that reduces the amount of data by sorting out the relevant data without major delay; e.g. self-driving cars will not have the luxury to lose processing time by sending data around the globe. Further about artificial intelligence, Dr. Tilman Buchner informed that machine learning demonstrates already today significant progress, e.g. algorithms that help machines to identify objects and can predict movements which could lead to increased worker safety in factories.

In addition to the major conference topics, the EuPIA Annual Conference also provided for an update of the EuPIA activities in 2020, the latest market figures, and an update from the printing industry.

The latter was represented by Beatrice Klose (Intergraf) who underscored the importance of direct marketing for the printing industry and reviewed current challenges. Among them has certainly been the pandemic from which the printing industry suffered in 2020 when overall sales went down by about 12%. Ms Klose reported that a key type of advertisement, the doordrop, worked extremely well during the crisis and that significant improvements in interactions could be detected. However, the doordrop is challenged in several EU member states that consider introducing opt-in system, instead of opt-out systems. EuPIA supports the European advocacy of Intergraf.

This has been your conference summary, thank you for reading. Stay healthy and see you next year in Budapest!