Progress on the Dutch pilots in the ICT sector
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The ICT pilot projects are progressing at different stages.

Data security challenges
First, we've been engaged in a project to explore more sustainable ways to deal with data-containing ICT hardware of the **national government**.

A couple of years ago, we started the process by researching what the options were. Currently all hardware is shredded under the notion of 'data security'. Yet software is available to wipe the data to levels which are compliant to strict government standards. A first pilot, involving about 8,000 hardware items, has shown that data wiping and resale is possible for about 33% of this batch. In a second pilot, we aim to increase this percentage.

By looking further into the process of discarding used ICT equipment, we identified the important mechanisms for the management of residual value. An important discovery identified that an integral approach is needed - from procurement, through the use phase and on to disposal - as well as coherent communication. For example, communications need to reinforce that the hardware is not only used by the government department, but remains a valuable and re-useable item by others after the initial intended use has finished. Therefore, discarded products shouldn't be treated as waste, which happens now, and thrown in baskets to be 'shredded' costing the department money. They should be treated as products which have a re-useable value that third parties are willing to pay good money for.

Circular mobile offices
Secondly, we're assisting the **Province of Utrecht** in the Netherlands with the circular procurement of about 1,000 notebooks and tablets in combination with docking stations to enable them to set up ICT work spaces for their employees.

For the Province, taking responsibility for the 'circle' means they should organise the beginning (purchase) as well as the end (discard) of the product lifecycle. The crucial question is: What power do procurers have to link the end with the beginning? It's evident that a low environmental impact is supported by keeping hardware functional as long as possible. Yet producers and suppliers of new equipment have more interest in selling products that have a shorter life so they'll have to sell more. Circularity is only possible when all stakeholders in the circle have a shared interest.

In this pilot, we are shaking things up. The approach is a combination of 'old school' GPP (criteria at the beginning) with clever additions for the end stage. The challenges are many: What is legally possible? e.g. disproportionality, How much can you ask without ending up empty handed? How can you stimulate eco-design so value is kept high as long as possible? etc.

The Province has split the approach and will launch the tender for hardware this month. After the selection of a contractor for the hardware, the province will approach the market with the 'end-stage' questions.

Resolving circular challenges
Finally, in answer to the dependence on producers and suppliers mentioned above, the national government is investigating ways to be less dependent. This year they will launch a

tender for 150,000 to 200,000 ICT working spaces (hardware includes desktops and notebooks, etc) for public servants from the national government. One of the ideas is to request only hardware that can facilitate internet access. The idea is that all applications are stored centralised at a server in a cloud instead of locally. The functionality of the equipment will be dependent on hardware-related issues but, in this case, independent to operating system development. The latter being one of the major causes of hardware to become obsolete.

All in all, circular economy in ICT brings along interesting challenges. They include data security, economies of scale, dependence on producers (200,000 is nothing to one of the big brand owners) and dependence on operating systems. We very much feel the linear process as we try to bend it into a circle.

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