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PPWR - European Parliament discriminates plastics packaging

Press Release

“Packaging neutrality objectives and similar material circularity targets will create the level playing field that Europe really needs.” stated EuPC managing director Bernard Merx in his first reaction to the vote.

Last week, the European Parliament adopted its negotiating position on the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) proposed last year by the European Commission. Unfortunately, many amendments from the Environmental Committee initial Report that single out plastic packaging have passed the consensus of the Plenary session.

European Plastics Converters are disappointed by the unfounded tailored measures against plastics, which seem to be based predominantly on emotional motives. Some examples of such emotional motivated voting are special reduction targets for certain plastic packaging, exemptions for composite packaging from the recycle use quotas, and bans on single-use stretch films and more.

The lack of rational support to a plastics converting and recycling industry that has been working for improved sustainability, recyclability, circularity as well as on improved performances of its packaging offer is a missed opportunity. In our perspective, topics like additional food waste as a direct consequence should have been addressed, whereas plastic packaging reuse quotas and others have not been very well assessed either. In our view the voted amendments will therefore not bring the expected environmental goals the Parliament desires.

Moreover, the lack of consideration for how to reach the ambitious recycled content targets adds perplexity to their feasibility in coming years. The proposed targets are based on the assumption of a given consistent availability of high-quality recycled raw materials, that has proven to be already lacking today. Linear waste management systems in many Member States with still open landfills and subsidized incineration have for years been blocking required additional investments in high-quality infrastructure and high-tech systems for collection, sorting and recycling.

Practical solutions such as credit-based systems and clear exemptions must be included in a final version of the PPWR to allow the plastics converting and recycling industry, mostly composed of SMEs, and their customers, to effectively comply and support the market of high-quality recycled materials to naturally grow.



Further concerns come from the ban of packaging falling in recyclability grade D or below, which may negatively affect future innovation and will have unforeseeable impacts on many, widely recycled packaging formats. The possibility for Member States to adopt more stringent national measures ultimately undermines the harmonisation spirit of the regulation and risks creating the patchwork effect that we witness today in the sustainability arena.

At the same time, however, EuPC welcomes many positive amendments, notably the exclusion for dangerous goods from the scope of the Regulation, the various exemptions under reuse obligations and the possibility to prove high recyclability rates for packaging formats under Annex V.

The attention must now go to the Council where many pending aspects will be addressed in order to work together in delivering a new era for sustainable packaging and its future. We trust that the Council, which is closer to the realities at stake, will finalise this piece of EU regulation that everybody wants to see closed, taking our concerns into account, before the EU elections in June 2024.

Meanwhile, we continue to be open for strategic fact-based dialogues.

End of Press Release.

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