

# Plastics Packaging2040

*PlasticsEurope's Voluntary Commitment  
to increasing circularity and resource efficiency*

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## Executive Summary

The European Commission aims to transform Europe into a more circular and resource efficient economy. PlasticsEurope fully supports this objective.

It is widely recognised that plastics have a crucial role to play in delivering a more sustainable future. Through their unique combination of light-weight, durability and other intrinsic properties, plastics already contribute to emissions reduction and more efficient use of resources across a range of different sectors and everyday applications. As a result of their versatility and capacity for innovation, plastic materials are also frequently best placed to support breakthrough sustainable technologies.

However, challenges relating to littering and end-of-life options for certain types of plastics waste must be addressed if the material is to achieve its fullest potential in a circular and resource efficient economy.

It is in this spirit of commitment to future generations, PlasticsEurope has decided to set a series of ambitious targets and initiatives up to 2040.

**The Plastics Packaging2040 Voluntary Commitment** focuses on **preventing leakage of plastics** into the environment, **improving resource efficiency and the circularity of plastics packaging** applications.

PlasticsEurope will aim at **achieving the goal of 100% re-use, recycling** and or recovery **of all plastics packaging** in the EU-28, Norway and Switzerland by 2040. The overriding focus of this commitment is to ensure **high rates of re-use and recycling** with the ambition to **reach 60% re-use and recycling** of plastics packaging **by 2030 and 70% in 2040**.

Ensuring the highest possible rates for recycling and re-use will require actions in the following areas:

- Raw material producers will ensure that all polymers supplied to the packaging chain are intrinsically recyclable\*
- Increased efforts along the value chain to include eco-design aspects to deliver sustainable packaging solutions e.g. facilitating re-usability and recyclability

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\* Recyclable means the intrinsic properties of the polymers to be recycled

- Collaboration with recyclers and public authorities on the application of improved separate waste collection systems
- Public and private funding
- Investment in research and development of:
  - enhanced waste sorting technology
  - more effective physical recycling machinery
  - innovative and economical chemical recycling technologies

The targets for recycling and reuse of packaging in general will complement already established recycling programmes for specific plastics types.

Another important pillar of the Plastics Packaging2040 Voluntary Commitment is a further increase in existing **activities aimed at preventing littering** that includes educational projects across Member States, targets to prevent pellet loss, and new research into the origins of the most commonly occurring plastic litter in the environment.

These efforts will be complemented by **additional actions to enhance the resource efficiency of plastics packaging** and **accelerate innovation** aimed at boosting their circularity. This will involve further research into alternative feedstocks, more regular updates of product Life-Cycle Inventories and Environmental Product Declarations, the publication of extended waste data, and new eco-design guidelines for plastics packaging.

PlasticsEurope will work on concrete **action plans and time-based performance indicators** against all of the above objectives by mid-2018. From 2019, an annual progress report will be published.

General oversight of the Plastics Packaging2040 Voluntary Commitment will be provided by an independent **committee** made up of representatives of the European Commission, European Parliament, national and local authorities, civil society and academia.

Delivering against these ambitious objectives will also depend on the commitment and support of policy makers at European, national and local level to ensure the implementation of appropriate regulatory frameworks, as well as the mobilisation of public funding.

## Introduction

The European Commission aims at transforming Europe into a more circular and resource efficient economy. PlasticsEurope fully supports this objective.

It is widely recognised that plastics have a crucial role to play in delivering a more sustainable future. Through their unique combination of light-weight, durability and other intrinsic properties, plastics already contribute to emissions reduction and more efficient use of resources across a range of different sectors and everyday applications. As a result of their versatility and capacity for innovation, plastic materials are also invariably best placed to support breakthrough sustainable technologies.

However, challenges relating to littering and end-of-life options for certain types of plastics waste - especially packaging waste - must be addressed if the material is to achieve its fullest potential in a circular and resource efficient economy.

It is in this spirit of commitment to sustainable development, PlasticsEurope has decided to set a series of ambitious targets and initiatives up to 2040 that are focussed on the key areas of preventing leakage of plastics into the environment, improving resource efficiency and increasing recycling and re-use rates.

With this Voluntary Commitment, PlasticsEurope is advancing the plastics industry's role to a next level of engagement, recognising that this transformation will only take place through solutions put into reality and the regulatory support of the EU institutions.

### ***Making Circularity and Resource Efficiency a Reality***

PlasticsEurope is committed to accelerate ongoing and establish new initiatives to achieve a more circular and resource efficient economy. The regional scope is the EU-28 plus Norway and Switzerland. From 2019, an annual progress report will be published.

## Section I – General Commitments

### 1. Preventing Plastics Litter in the Environment

#### 1.1 Actions to Prevent Pellet Loss

Operation Clean Sweep (OCS) is a voluntary programme aiming towards zero pellet loss from the manufacture of plastic pellets and their subsequent handling, distribution and processing.

PlasticsEurope is in the process of implementing OCS and continues working with the entire value chain to fully develop OCS at all levels, including transport and logistics.

PlasticsEurope will establish a roadmap in 2018 and set up a transparent, harmonised assessment and monitoring scheme in line with EU standards to report its progress back to the EU institutions and key stakeholders on a yearly basis.

#### 1.2 Actions to Prevent Littering

##### a) Reduce Littering of Top Plastic Items Found in the Environment

By 2018 the PlasticsEurope will intensify its engagement with key stakeholders to investigate the type of plastic items found in the European environment, and will subsequently work to develop and implement solutions to prevent these items from being littered.

##### b) Support to Educational Programmes

PlasticsEurope will continue to work closely together with other stakeholders to develop and support projects aimed at raising awareness, positively enhancing knowledge levels, as well as the attitude and behaviour of citizens. For example, more than 30 educational related projects that are running in 28 member states under the flag of Marine Litter Solutions like Grimpola Ecomar Foundation (Spain), Recykling Rejs (Poland), CSI: Litter Challenge (UK), and La plastica in vacanza (Plastics on holiday) (Italy). These projects are regularly reviewed and updated.

## **2. Improving Resource Efficiency and Accelerating Innovation to Increase Circularity**

### 2.1 Accelerate using Alternative Feedstocks

In addition to increasing recycling in the value chain, PlasticsEurope will continue to expand and explore the use of CO<sub>2</sub> and other renewable feedstocks. For example, by 2019 it will conduct a study on plastics in the circular economy and on increasing the use of alternative feedstocks.

Based on this study, recommendations for actions will be formulated aiming at minimising environmental impacts.

### 2.2 Facilitate Future Resource Efficiency Gains

To utilise additional and future potential opportunities, the key activities listed below have been identified:

a) Product Life Cycle Inventory

PlasticsEurope will regularly update and publish its Life-Cycle Inventory dataset (LCI) and Environmental Product Declarations (EPD) for the main plastics and recyclates on a 3-yearly basis.

b) Extended Waste Data

PlasticsEurope will regularly collect and publish data to support the monitoring of the transition to a more circular and resource efficient economy.

c) Eco-Design Guidelines for Plastics Packaging

PlasticsEurope will continue to support current and future activities in the development of eco-design guidelines for Plastics packaging and design for recycling in order to maximise re-use and recycling of plastics packaging.

d) Standardisation support/requirement

PlasticsEurope will actively pursue an integrated and consistent approach to the standardisation of environmental aspects such as recycling, circular economy and bio-based materials at an international, European and national level, as well as the removal in existing standards of unjustified restrictions that hinder the increased use of recyclates.

e) Study of “The role of plastics in the circular economy”

By 2019 PlasticsEurope will publish an independent third party report about “The role of plastics in the circular economy”.

This report will encompass all aspects related to the manufacturing, use and disposal of plastics, such as the impact of plastic materials in daily life, socio-economic aspects as well as environmental challenges.

### **3. Creating Global Awareness**

PlasticsEurope will further increase its engagement to help to deploy appropriate solutions to prevent marine litter and promote circularity around the world. It will strengthen its engagement with other international industry organisations and stakeholders like the Global Plastics Alliance (GPA) and the World Plastics Council (WPC) to demonstrate commitment and initiate global action. It will collaborate and participate in thought-leadership-dialogues with EC, UNEP, G7/G20, WBSCD, and others.

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## Section II – Sector Specific Commitments

### 1. Increasing Plastics Packaging Recycling and Re-use

In addition to the *General Commitments* (s. Section I) and its involvement in a significant number of national initiatives, PlasticsEurope has established a number of Initiatives to bring forward specific commitments as the basis for developing feasible approaches and innovative solutions, whilst ensuring multi-stakeholder engagement and collaboration along the value chain. These programmes will stimulate increased recycling across different plastic types and sectors.

#### a) Polyolefins Circular Economy Initiative

An in-depth stakeholder discussion and detailed analysis of the EU polyolefins recycling practices is being conducted together with the plastics value chain. This will ascertain the level of polyolefins reuse and recycling as well as new end markets for recyclates that are required to meet the newly set EU plastics packaging recycling targets and the long term objectives expressed within PlasticsEurope's Voluntary Commitment.

By the end of 2018, using the results of the above analysis a roadmap will be developed that will identify bottlenecks to circularity and the best options to remove them.

#### b) Styrenics Circular Solutions

The Polystyrene (PS) and Expandable Polystyrene (EPS) producers are actively supporting the development of technologies that enable the recycling of Polystyrene-based products back into their original applications. With a strong focus on innovation, these new technologies will enable the incorporation of post-consumer waste back into production processes, meeting most-demanding standards. By the end of 2018, the most promising technologies and the path forward will be assessed.

The PS/EPS producers will actively collaborate with the complete value chains to further improve the collection and sorting systems for packaging waste. The objective is to considerably expand the accessible market of post-consumer PS and EPS waste.

An independent legal structure with dedicated funding will be set up, and business cases will be developed for the industrial scale-up of the most promising technologies. An example of such business case is the PSLoop cooperative that was established to build a pilot plant which will recycle PS/EPS construction materials.

The EU is invited to monitor and review the progress made.

c) Vinyl Circular Solutions (VCS)

Vinyl Circular Solutions (VCS) is the PVC Packaging Platform of the European Council of Vinyl Manufacturers (ECVM). VCS actively develops and promotes the use of eco-efficient, cost-effective and safe PVC packaging materials which ensure that packed articles have a considerably increased shelf-life. At the end of their life PVC packaging can be mechanically recycled.

The European Council of Vinyl Manufacturers is a founding member of VinylPlus® ([www.vinylplus.eu](http://www.vinylplus.eu)), the long established Voluntary Commitment to sustainable development by the entire European PVC value chain (resin manufacturers, additives producers and converters), and a benchmark for other industry initiatives. Launched in 2000, VinylPlus® aims at strengthening the sustainability of PVC products and of the entire industry through a holistic approach including increasing safe and quality PVC recycling ([annual progress report](#)). The VinylPlus® commitment includes, amongst others, a target to recycle 800,000 tonnes of PVC per year by 2020.

To continue the journey started in 2000, the European PVC value chain will review in 2018 VinylPlus®' achievements with a view to defining, in consultation with the stakeholders, new ambitious recycling targets alongside a set of other concrete objectives for the next phase of its Voluntary Commitment towards 2030.

## Section III - A Regulatory Framework for Success

### 1. EU Regulatory Support

In order to achieve our targets towards a more sustainable, resource efficient and globally competitive European Plastics Industry, EU policy support is required:

- **Zero Plastics to Landfill**

The landfilling of recyclable and other recoverable post-consumer waste shall be stopped as soon as possible in the European Union.

- **Internal Market**

Maintain the EU internal market legal base for the EU Packaging & Packaging Waste Directive and all its amending acts.

- **Separate Collection**

Mandatory separate collection of all packaging from residual waste by 2025.

- **Alignment of REACH/Waste/ CLP/ Product legislation**

Alignment of REACH, CLP and waste and product legislation to remove the obstacles for recycling. It includes the implementation of a risk based approach in order to secure the full potential of plastics recycling of longer life applications into controlled loops (with traceability of SVHC additives) and secure the safety of virgin/recycled plastics for their intended application.

- **Food Contact Regulation**

Adoption of all measures required for the full implementation of the Food Contact Regulation EC/282/2008.

## 2. EU Funding

Mobilise public funding (such as Horizon 2020) to encourage and stimulate innovation in plastics:

- feedstock recycling
- re-use models
- low carbon footprint feedstocks
- innovation in traceability of materials, collection schemes, sorting and treatment of secondary raw materials.

As this will establish a multi-year process of continuous improvement and learning, we invite to monitor and guide it with the help of a committee, comprising of members from the European Commission and Parliament, academia, civil society, and the PlasticsEurope. While providing the general oversight of the Plastics Packaging2040 Commitments, this advisory committee serves to complement the respective stakeholder committees of the individual Circular Economy and Value Chain Initiatives.

Brussels January 2018

Signatories

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PlasticsEurope is one of the leading European trade associations with centres in Brussels, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Milan and Paris. The association is networking with European and national plastics associations and has more than 100 member companies, producing over 90% of all polymers across the EU28 member states plus Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

[www.plasticseurope.org](http://www.plasticseurope.org)

### **Styrenics Circular Solutions**

The Styrenics Circular Solutions is a joint industry initiative to increase the circularity of polystyrene. The initiative engages the value chain in the development and industrialization of new recycling technologies and solutions. It aims to strengthen the sustainability of polystyrene products while improving resource efficiency within the circular economy.

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The European Council of Vinyl Manufacturers represents six leading European producers of PVC resin, which account for around 75% of the EU-28 PVC resin production. These businesses operate around 40 different plants spread over 23 sites, and employ approximately 7,000 people.

For additional information: [www.pvc.org](http://www.pvc.org) .

Polyolefins Circular Economy Initiative  
[Description to be included]