

Flash report - Meeting with Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius and Plastic Recyclers Europe (PRE) 22 July 2020

Participants :

- Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius, European Commission
- Mr. [REDACTED], CeDo Recycling BV
- Mr. [REDACTED], Poly Recycling AG
- Mr. [REDACTED], Eslavas Plasticos SA
- Mr. [REDACTED], Aliplast S.p.A.
- Mr. Sebastian Petithuguenin, PRE Management Committee, CEO, Paprec Group
- Mr. [REDACTED], Veolia
- Mr. Rune Thoralfsson, PRE Management Committee, CEO, Norfolier GreenTec AS
- Mrs Rozalina Petrova, Member of Cabinet, EC
- Mr [REDACTED], EC
- Mr [REDACTED], EC, DG ENV, Unit B1
- Mr. [REDACTED], EC, DG ENV, Unit B3

Commissioner Sinkevičius welcomes the participants and introduces the meeting by expressing his concern regarding the difficult situation of plastic recycling due to covid and low crude oils prices.

He recalls the central role of EGD and CEAP, including in the recovery process, the importance to learn from the lessons of this crisis as well as the continuous contacts since the beginning of the crisis between Commission services and the recycling sector.

A tour de table with the participants emphasizes several issues among which:

- low prices and no demand for recyclates are hampering investments (i.e. in collection and sorting - per resin, colour, application food/non food) and innovation (i.e. to develop recycled materials). This consequently makes meeting targets difficult. More demand is needed for recycled plastics within Europe to prevent materials from ending up in European landfills
- quality remains compromised by mix with residual waste. This call for harmonized quality standards to increase availability of high quality recycling

Participants point to solutions:

EPR is considered a main tool, not only to keep cost as low as possible but also to push for quality, innovation, and closed loops (instead of open loops). Design for recycling (DfR) would allow to achieve high quality recycling materials and be competitive with virgin materials; Essential requirements should aim at limiting the complexity and number of different materials. Scientific evidence is needed (ex. the work of the Circular Plastics Alliance (CPA) on guidance to increase recyclability), and on tests for quality. In addition, the whole value chain has to be involved

Participants point to specific sector situations. For example:

Packaging : need for harmonization of key requirements, importance to monitor commercial and industrial packaging as there is a gap of traceability

C&D: secure funding and collection, not available now

EE plastic: lack of demand in EU, since EE are produced in Asia

ELV plastics: increase selective sorting, not enough at the moment + push for demand

Overall, in order to solve issue of prices there is a need to create a genuine market for recyclates, decoupled from virgin prices, to create a level-playing field and to allow investments with better

perspective. In this perspective, recycled content is considered a booster. Recent experience shows that SUP objectives and binding rules for PET bottles safeguard the stream. Deposit Refund Scheme (DRS) is another driver (see the example of LT).

The example of Eucert Plast is given as exemplary for transparency on safety, quality, volumes, which allows investments, but traceability remains a challenge

Several best practices are being developed, and they could be replicated. In particular, building on the GHG emissions reduction potential by recycling, measuring and targeting carbon footprint of the products are key driver for uptake.

Commissioner Sinkevičius recalls the measures put forward by the EC to address the issues that arose at the beginning of the COVID pandemic: guidelines, green lanes, recovery plan (recycling being a priority sectors considering that there is a 10 billion euros investment gap). Work with MS is therefore necessary to reap the funding opportunities (MS authorities to provide blueprint for investment needs)

Concerning policy development at EU level, the EC is preparing a regulatory framework and ensuring the effective implementation of the waste package along 5 major axes :

- Essential Requirements (ER) for packaging : improve design for reuse and recycling in link with EGD goal (all by 2030), will contribute to quality harmonization
- Promote uptake recyclates : for example the SUPD and its effective implementation
- Facilitate trade : with development of end of waste criteria
- Basel Convention review: which offers the opportunity to support circular economy
- Quality standards to develop trust in secondary materials: to ensure trusted calculation methods for the recycled content (eg beverage bottles)

Commissioner Sinkevičius closes the meeting thanking for the constructive exchange and confirming that the Commission counts on PRE and will continue to ensure involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the upcoming steps.