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DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs

**Consumer, Environmental and Health Technologies
Chemicals**

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Subject: Summary note on the Workshop on a "European Strategy for Plastics: the role of value chains" – 23rd June 2017, room BREY "Fernand Braun"

The workshop was attended by 30 participants, representing the European Commission, industry associations, companies (including chemical companies, plastics convertors, consumer goods manufacturers and waste collectors) and local authorities and civil society.

The objective of the workshop was to discuss the role of different actors at each stage of the plastics value chain in increasing resource efficiency, gathering information about existing collaborative initiatives between these actors and exploring ways to organise and promote such initiatives in the future.

Participants underlined the importance of the engagement of actors at each stage of the value chain, from resin producers and plastic convertors to downstream producers, recyclers and waste collectors.

The role of chemical companies, in particular resin producers, at the start of the plastics value chain was discussed first. Chemical companies identified various challenges when collaborating with other actors in the supply chain, notably finding investments and de-risking innovative projects, managing/sharing intellectual property (IP) and scaling up pilot projects. Another emerging challenge for resin producers is finding ways to substitute hazardous chemicals and to introduce markers for traceability purposes. Some participants highlighted the risk of downcycling (losing quality/performance), while others suggested that downcycling is not relevant as long as the product is recycled.

At the production and design stage, participants indicated that more easily recyclable materials should be used. Some participants also stressed that products with a long lifespan should be distinguished, as they are unlikely to come back into the same value chain and performance (longevity rather than recyclability) is the key factor. Some participants underlined the importance of the use of improved lifecycle assessment (LCA) techniques, as well as the development of effective extended producer responsibility (EPR) schemes. At the

waste collection stage, the need for better pricing of collection activities and more harmonised collection approaches were raised. The role of local authorities was also underlined.

Participants agreed that successful collaboration requires the active involvement of various actors across the value chain, yet also stressed the significant investments needed to ensure successful collaboration. Various examples of successful collaborative projects were shared. One of the examples was the French 2ACR collaborative platform, which brings together all different actors in the value chain. Another example that was raised was the Dutch plastic value chain agreement (Ketenakkoord Kunststof Kringloop), which includes individual targets and commitments for each participating organisation. Participants of the workshop acknowledged that clear commitments are crucial.

In response to the question whether collaborative projects should be organised per polymer or per application, participants indicated that there is no single solution.

Various participants agreed that voluntary agreements are a suitable starting point. Some suggested broadening the focus of Ecodesign from energy to resource efficiency and ultimately integrating voluntary agreements into Ecodesign. One participant suggested establishing an EU Recycling Forum to exchange ideas. Furthermore, various participants underlined the importance of a systemic approach. Internal market barriers, for instance on packaging waste, were raised as an obstacle.

The importance of increasing transparency across the value chain was also discussed. The use of tracers or digital watermarks was raised as a solution to improve separation, e.g. to distinguish between food/non-food content. Technologies already exist, but need to be further refined and applied.

Some participants specifically encouraged the Commission to provide more support for relevant R&D projects, scale-up initiatives and other collaborative projects. According to some, support is also needed to make smaller niche markets more appealing for recyclers. Participants also reiterated the need to remove market barriers caused by regulatory divergences between Member States. Lastly, some pointed to the consumer angle and the importance of raising awareness among consumers.