

Press Release

Brussels, 21.10.2008

Plastics recovery up to 50% and growth in demand continues to outpace GDP

The plastics industry – comprising PlasticsEurope, EuPC, EuPR and EPRO – has published its 18th report on trends in production, demand and recovery of plastics called the “Compelling Facts about Plastics 2007”. The report can be downloaded in pdf format or ordered in printed form from the partners in English, German, French, Italian, Spanish and Polish.

In 2007 recovery of plastics in the 27 EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland (EU27 + NO/CH) reached 50% - up 1% on 2006 – mainly due to strong growth in recycling. This was achieved in a year with good growth in demand - 3% - to a total of 52.5 million tonnes across EU27+NO/CH, again exceeding GDP growth. 9 countries (representing 29% of the population in EU27+NO/CH) recovered more than 80% of their used plastics and are near to realising their diversion from landfill vision.

The key observations for 2007 are:

Demand growth for plastics continued to outpace GDP

Demand in EU27+NO/CH grew by 3% over 2006, exceeding GDP to reach 52.5 million tonnes (up from 51.0 million tonnes in 2006). Globally demand grew to 260 million tonnes, up from 245 million tonnes in 2006.

50% of all plastics across EU27+NO/CH are recovered

Half of all post-consumer plastics ending up as waste were recovered either as recycling or as energy recovery. Recycling rates increased to 20.4% and energy recovery rates remained stable at 29.2%.

Disposal to landfill dropped – but progress is slow

Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands and – for the first time - Norway now recover more than 80% of their waste. They are all near to realising complete diversion from landfill. Progress, however, remains slow amongst countries with lower recovery rates. Half of the EU Member States still recover less than 30%. This reflects the slow political decision process and the long lead times for energy recovery options. It is proven that good performance on energy recovery is not contradictory to good performance on recycling.

Quantity of used plastics increased but amount disposed in landfill remained stable

Driven by economic development and increased substitution by plastics in a range of applications, the quantity of post-consumer plastics waste increased by 0.9 million tonnes over 2006. However thanks to the increase in recovery the quantity going to landfill remained stable. This continues the trend which has been apparent for several years that: There is decoupling of economic growth and plastics going to landfill.

Quantity of mechanical recycling grew by 11% and energy recovery by 3% over 2006

Driven by increasing virgin material prices, improved collection and sorting technology, improved schemes and strong demand, mechanical recycling experienced another year with good growth. The increase was again higher than the average growth for the past 10 years. Applications driving this growth include traditional streams like bottles and film but also e.g. window profiles. Closed loop bottle recycling is gaining momentum in a number of countries. Energy recovery saw a slower rate of growth compared to earlier years, reflecting longer lead times and slow decision processes in several countries.

For questions contact:

Jan-Erik Johansson, PlasticsEurope,
jan-erik.johansson@plasticseurope.org

phone +44 2074575029

Alexandre Dangis, EuPC
Alexandre.dangis@eupc.org

phone +32 27324124

Bernard Merckx, EuPR
Bernard.merkx@eupr.org

phone +32 27324124

Tristan Brunin, EPRO
Tristan.brunin@valorplast.com

phone +33 146531095

Note to editors:

This report has been produced in partnership between PlasticsEurope, EuPC, EuPR and EPRO.

The European plastics industry makes a significant contribution to the welfare in Europe by enabling innovation, creating quality of life to citizens and facilitating resource efficiency and climate protection. More than 1.6 million people are working in about 50.000 companies (mainly small and medium sized companies in the converting sector) to create a turnover in excess of 300 billion € per year.

PlasticsEurope is one of the leading European trade associations with centers in Brussels, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Milan and Paris. We are networking with European and national plastics associations and have more than 100 member companies, producing over 90% of all polymers across the EU27 member states plus Norway, Switzerland, Croatia and Turkey.

EuPC – European Plastics Converters - is the professional representative body of plastics converters within Europe whose activity embraces all sectors of the plastics converting industry including recycling. The overall objective is to defend and promote the interests of the European plastics converting industry

- Voicing the industry's opinion towards European and international institutions and non-governmental organisations;
- Maintaining relationships with corresponding organisations in Europe and worldwide;
- Carrying out business surveys, studies and research projects in all aspects of the plastics processing industry.

EuPR- European Plastics Recyclers - is the professional representative body of plastics recyclers in Europe. EuPR promotes plastics mechanical recycling and conditions that enable profitable and sustainable business, while offering a service platform to its members. EuPR members bring together 85% of the European recycling capacity processing more than 2.5 million tonnes of collected plastics per year.

EPRO is the association of the national organisations charged with organising and promoting recycling and recovery of plastics throughout Europe. EPRO provides a unique forum for the leading specialists in plastics waste management from across Europe to exchange learning, develop integrated plastics packaging waste strategies and support technological development.