



For immediate release - Press Release

Brussels, 16th April 2014

EuPC comments on the European Parliament's plenary vote on plastic carrier bags

On April 16th 2014, the European Parliament voted in favour of a legislative resolution on a reduction of lightweight plastic carrier bags in Europe. This plenary vote in Strasbourg followed a legislative proposal by the European Commission in November 2013 and the subsequent ENVI Committee report drafted by MEP Margrete Auken (the 'Auken report').

Whilst EuPC welcomes the aim of this legislative resolution, to reduce the use of lightweight plastic carrier bags in Europe, EuPC believes allowing Member States the possibility to ban plastic carrier bags and legalize the current Italian situation, goes against the internal market rules and will lead to little environmental benefits, whilst damaging investment in the European industry. EuPC is also disappointed to see that the European Parliament, as a whole, kept several unsustainable provisions which were contained in the Auken Report. These provisions relate to *de facto* exemptions for biodegradable plastic carrier bags. The final legislative resolution maintains that biodegradable and compostable materials are "*less harmful to the environment than conventional plastic carrier bags*". This statement is untrue and is not supported by any credible scientific evidence. Furthermore, EuPC would call for an in depth review of EN Standard 13432 to clarify the current ambiguity in the differences between biodegradable and compostable materials.

During a plenary debate on the bags vote, the day before the plenary vote (April 15th), certain MEPs were calling for a push for biodegradable materials. EuPC is very worried by this as biodegradable materials are not yet proven anymore sustainable than conventional materials and can, in fact, be even less sustainable. As a result of the final text approved at plenary level, the European Parliament is now in danger of repeating lessons already learnt in the bio-fuels experience (legislative push of alternative materials which are not proven to be any more beneficial for the environment).

As mentioned by Commissioner Potočnik during the debate, more scientific evidence is needed on biodegradable materials to see where these materials really makes sense, from a sustainability point of view. The Commissioner also highlighted issues that appear to have been ignored by a large number of MEPs, these were as follows: i) the detrimental impacts that biodegradable materials may have on the plastics recycling industry; ii) the fact that biodegradable feedstocks can be competing with food crops, will have high water use, land use and fertiliser use; and iii) even if a material is fully biodegradable it will still take a considerable period of time to break down and therefore, will still be a problem for littering.

The Council will now take on the Commission's proposal and the European Parliament's resolution. EuPC hopes that the new Parliament, together with the Council, will overturn the questionable provisions in the Parliament's resolution on plastic carrier bags.

For more information please contact: info@eupc.org

EuPC is the EU-level Trade Association, based in Brussels, representing European Plastics Converters. Plastics converters (sometimes called "Processors") are the heart of the plastics industry.