

Press Release

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## **Plastics Europe launches the second edition of the “Circular Economy for Plastics” report**

Findings will serve as a foundation for intensified dialogue with stakeholders and the transition of the plastics industry towards circularity and climate neutrality 2050 goals. Despite positive developments, the report signals the need to accelerate progress to reach circularity objectives.

Plastics Europe, the European association of plastics manufacturers, launches today the second edition of “Circular Economy for Plastics – A European Overview”, a detailed report of plastics flows related to production, conversion, consumption, waste management, recycling, and use of recycled plastics in Europe in 2020.

Following the recent publication of SYSTEMIQ’s “[ReShaping Plastics](#)” report and the set of measures announced by Plastics Europe to accelerate the transition of the European plastics system towards a circular and net zero future, the new report offers a detailed analysis on Europe’s status quo on plastics’ life cycle in 2020. It also helps to track progress towards higher levels of recycling and recycled content and to assess the 2020 situation with regards to the European objectives and targets set in the [PPWD](#) and the [CPA](#).

Acknowledging the exceptional conditions of the year 2020, the production of post-consumer recycled plastics increased by 12%, compared to 2018. Their use in new products grew by 15%, reaching 4.6 million tonnes, setting the trend for higher levels of circularity in the plastics system.

The report highlights that the quantity of post-consumer plastics waste sent to recycling facilities also increased by up to 8% compared to 2018 figures, reaching a recycling rate of 35%. Yet, 65% of post-consumer plastics waste was still sent to landfill and incineration with energy recovery.

The report further indicates an overall European recycling rate of 46% (under the former calculation method of the PPWD), compared to 42% in 2018 in relation to plastics packaging. Equally encouraging, the figures for recycled content show that from 2018 to 2020 the quantity of recycled plastics used in packaging products increased by 43%.

Although 2020 data show positive developments, the report also signals that the pace of progress still needs to accelerate to reach medium and long-term circularity objectives. Indeed, the analysis observes that achieving the targets of the PPWD and the CPA would require doubling the current recycling capacities in Europe. As an industry, we recognise and support the need for faster systemic change. Investments in new technologies continue to accelerate: European plastics manufacturers plan to invest 7.2 billion euros by 2030 in chemical recycling to complement mechanical recycling, allowing an extra 3.4 million tonnes of recycled plastics to be made available in Europe by 2030.

Moreover, we welcome the upcoming revision of the [EU Waste Framework Directive](#), an essential piece of legislation to enable a faster development of needed capacities.

Additionally, the report underlines the data gap between plastics consumption and waste collection figures, which can partially be explained by plastic products being still in use. It will be a priority for Plastics Europe and its members, in collaboration with their value chain, to further investigate and better understand the underlying reasons for this gap and differentiate quantities in use from those potentially not captured in other waste streams.

To conclude, the report confirms that to accelerate progress towards circularity, it is essential to intensify the collaboration with value chain partners and to develop a new policy framework that better incentivises investments and innovation while keeping the European industry globally competitive.

Virginia Janssens, Managing Director of Plastics Europe, said: *“The “Circular Economy for Plastics” is a valuable report to better understand the dynamics of plastics flows in Europe. We believe it can serve as a solid foundation for intensified dialogue with our stakeholders. Our industry recognises that faster systemic change is needed to achieve higher circularity levels, especially when circularity itself is the most effective lever for emission reductions in the short and medium term. We acknowledge the importance of the challenge and are ready to increase the intensity and effectiveness of dialogue and collaboration with policy makers and plastics value chain partners to bring the circularity of plastics to the next level.”*

Dr Markus Steilemann, President of Plastics Europe, added: *“To speed up our industry’s journey to fully embrace the circular economy, we need a comprehensive toolkit. Enhanced recycling requires a boost in the collection and sorting of used plastics. Before they become a product, plastics must*

*be best designed for recycling, while their production needs low carbon feedstocks. This is how we can achieve deep systems change with knock-on effects across our value chains.”*

To access the report please click [here](#)

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### **Notes for Editors**

*PlasticsEurope is the pan-European association of plastics manufacturers with offices across Europe. For over 100 years, science and innovation has been the DNA that cuts across our industry. With close to 100 members producing over 90% of all polymers across Europe, we are the catalyst for the industry with a responsibility to openly engage with stakeholders and deliver solutions which are safe, circular and sustainable. We are committed to implementing long-lasting positive change.*