

Position Paper

Plastics Europe Position on Harmonised Collection and Sorting

Plastics Europe welcomes the revision of the Waste Framework Directive Revision (WFD) as we believe that waste collection and sorting systems should be improved to increase recycling rates and prevent plastics from being incinerated or landfilled. We share the Commissions concerns on low recycling rates, insufficient volumes of recyclates, the lack of efficient waste-collection, sorting and recycling systems provision in many Members States.

We therefore support the **call for harmonised separate collection and sorting methodologies across all EU Members States** to ensure the flow of high-quality material towards recyclers thereby securing the qualities and quantities of recycled plastics needed for incorporation into new products to achieve the circular economy goals. To this end, we believe that a harmonised system should consider the following recommendations:

- 1. To prevent confusion to citizens, improved harmonised separate waste collection should be facilitated by standard colours and/or clear instructions on labels for containers for both residual and recyclable materials (where practical) across all and within Members States.*
- 2. In order that waste is appropriately segregated and collected, coherent information must clearly be displayed on articles (and bins) to help citizens make the right choice when either committing plastic articles to waste or recycling at their end-of-life.*
- 3. We recommend the development of best practice **harmonised post-consumer waste collection schemes** for new facilities and the upgrading of current infrastructures in Member States. An example is given by the so-called 'dry-bin' concept for the collection of dry recyclables including all plastic packaging and in the future possible inclusion of articles such as plastic toys, small WEEE, etc.*
- 4. The collection of waste, however, must always be considered in line with appropriate downstream infrastructure for sorting and reprocessing. Currently, for example, when electronic equipment waste is collected their plastics components are separated by a product-dismantling step or shredding process for reuse, recycling or recovery. Following the proposed approach, however, such plastic-rich streams that cannot be recycled must be kept out of landfills and reprocessed in recovery facilities while recycling solutions continue to be developed.*

5. *In supporting the building of a sustainable EU recycling industry, focus needs to be put on supporting a **joined-up collection, sorting and recycling infrastructure**, which capture all plastic recyclables and also **helps recyclers optimise their process efficiencies** and resulting improved quality of outputs. This requires the support of municipalities and the waste management industry to invest into state-of-the-art automated sorting & reprocessing facilities. To satisfy the speed of infrastructure development and upgrade that is required in meeting circular economy targets, alongside private investments, it is key to ensure that funds deriving from existing financial instruments, like effective EPR schemes and the EU Own Resource on unrecycled plastics packaging are invested to enhance these infrastructures*
6. *New technologies can accept plastic formats which are currently not suitable for conventional recycling processes. Sorting and access to these plastic materials is essential for the development of these new plants which will contribute to provide additional quantities of high quality recyclates to meet recycled content targets and overall circular policy goals.*
7. *Many Member States do not collect flexible plastic packaging and we call on a requirement in the WFD that flexible plastics are collected for recycling in all Member States*
8. *Consistent qualities of collected plastics waste will translate directly into improved sorting process efficiencies and resulting outputs for recycling. We therefore support the work of the Circular Plastics Alliance in the development of quality standards for both the inputs to and outputs of sorting facilities to improve quality and reduce contamination of plastics for recycling.*

Please contact:

Plastics Europe
Judith Guerra-Falcon
Technical Affairs and Circular Economy Officer
Mobile: +32 (0)493 25 13 61
Email: Judith.guerra-falcon@plasticseurope.org

November 2022
