



**PCEP** Europe  
POLYOLEFIN  
Circular Economy Platform



# The European Plastics Industry Circular Economy Voluntary Commitments

Towards 50% Plastics Waste Recycling

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# 1 Foreword

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With these Voluntary Commitments, the signatories are advancing the plastics industry's role to a next level of engagement. Recognizing that this transformation will only take place through the implementation of real solutions that are sustained by regulatory support of the EU institutions, the plastics industry is committing itself to a basket of measures and initiatives.

These Voluntary Commitments focus on the key areas of increasing the recycling rates of plastics, including resource efficiency. Furthermore, these commitments will address the main markets of the plastics industry as well as a significant proportion of the plastics waste streams.

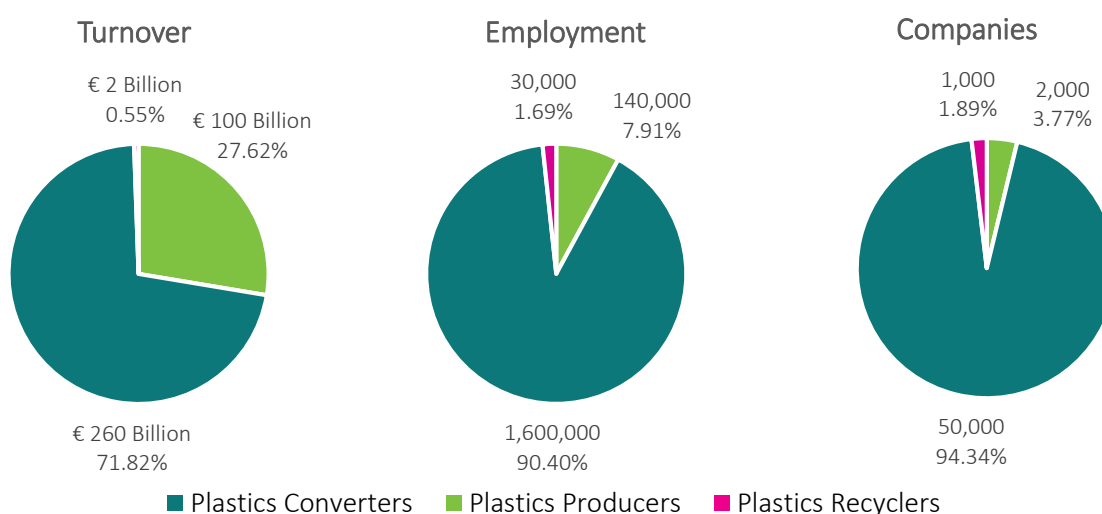
However, supporting EU regulatory requirements are strongly needed to ensure all the objectives will be met. All stakeholders have a role to play in this **major industry transformation process** which will benefit both, society and the environment.

The plastics industry will stimulate the further development of such polymer value chain initiatives and will continue to look for the best solutions to improve the quality of recycled materials ready to be reused in numerous applications. These measures will ensure the final goals of all commitments will be met at the latest in 2030 and that there is a clear vision for our objectives towards 2040.

We, as the plastics industry, intend to work close together within **polymer value chain initiatives** to ensure technical solutions are found in closed and controlled loops or through innovations.

We call upon the EU Commission to engage and stimulate designers, specifiers, brand owners, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and architects to join the polymer specific platforms.

## The EU Plastics Industry – Key Figures



Source: EuPC



## 2 Introduction

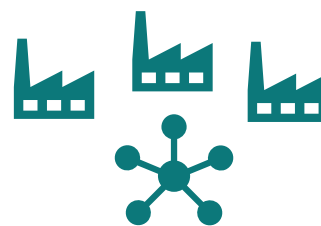
Due to the **complexity of the plastics industry in Europe**, which is composed of more than 60.000 companies, operating in a variety of markets, and the focus of the EU Commission on the **identified issues around marine litter and low recycling rates** of plastics, we propose immediate actions on recycling as well as the continuation of long-standing voluntary activities for PVC and PET. Together, as an overall setup of organisations that stimulate EU voluntary actions per polymer material type, we wish to develop **a new core European-wide action plan** on several plastics waste streams to achieve:

- **70% recycling and reuse of plastics packaging by 2040.**
- **50% recycling and reuse of plastics waste by 2040.**

The achievement of these targets would also contribute to reduce littering volumes considerably. Furthermore, we intend to be active in additional , product-specific markets and sectors such as for example the carpet industry.

**Converters and recyclers are key in all aspects of change** and their involvement will drive the agenda for the next decades. A sector composed of numerous small and medium sized companies is difficult to organise and therefore it is of major importance to drive polymer value chain collaboration. **It is vital that all companies can find the guidance of the industrial leaders through specific polymer value chain initiatives.** VinylPlus® and Petcore Europe can be seen as benchmark initiatives for other polymers and our industry will continue to follow this route in order to really make a difference and accelerate the transition toward circular plastics for other streams.

Time is now needed to enhance the joined working activities and to set up the appropriate independent legal structures. By doing so, **real industrial investments** can be captured and **full transparency towards EU legislators as well as consumers** can be guaranteed. These actions will enable us to concentrate on making the plastic industry and products more circular towards 2030.



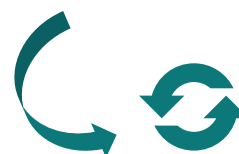
An industry of 60,000 companies



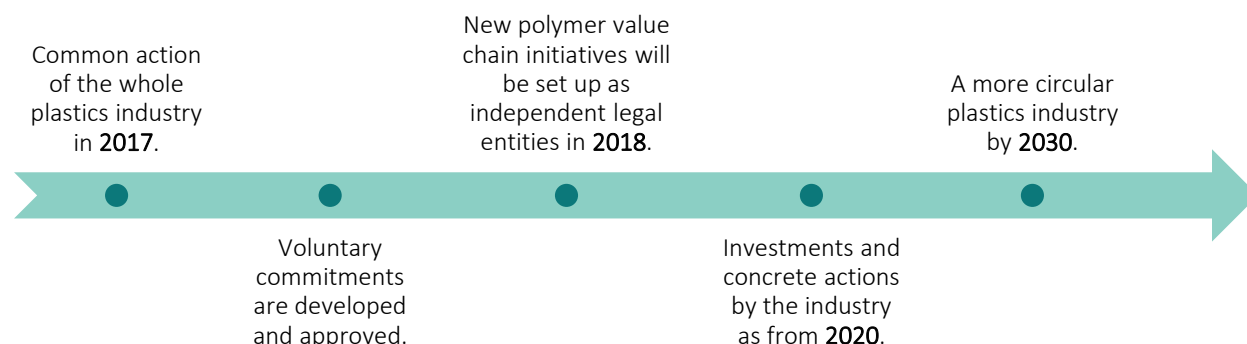
takes immediate action



to establish value chain initiatives



that will make the plastics industry & its products more circular by 2030.



Some plastic material types such as PVC and PET are more advanced in voluntary measures than others, but our overall industry objective is to unite all efforts, **maximise the recycling potential per polymer type** and consequently set up new and/or additional ambitious EU circularity targets for the future of our plastics industry to remain competitive at international level. This activity will drive **more polymer value chain collaborations towards sustainable plastic products**, improve product design and contribute to efficient awareness raising campaigns towards many small and medium sized companies, especially in the plastics converting and recycling industry.

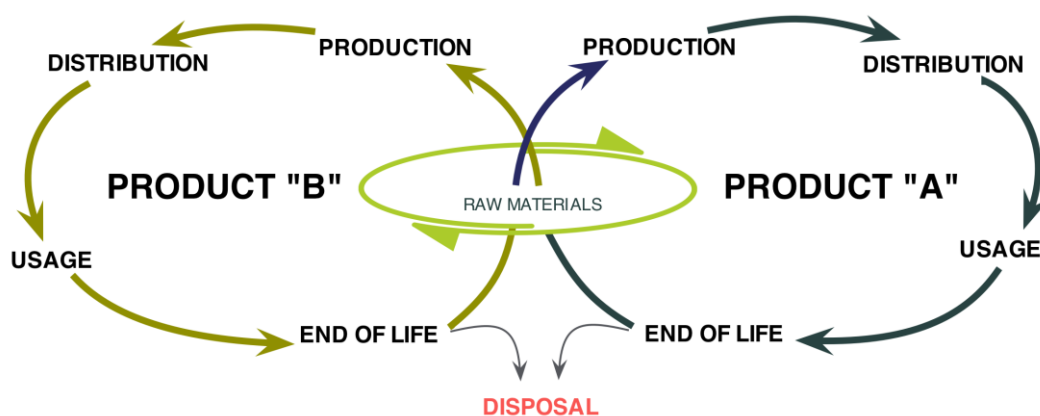
We, as a united plastics industry, commit to ambitious voluntary actions per polymer type provided the EU Institutions (EU Commission, European Parliament and EU Council) are able to recognize, monitor the progress at EU level and ensure that appropriate EU regulatory initiatives with a major positive impact on the plastics industry in Europe will be implemented in the next decades.



We all strongly believe in the combination of voluntary actions and EU regulatory measures to achieve our common goals and drive this new EU plastics strategy.

We invite the EU Commission and the EP to join the work of the different polymer platforms to monitor their progress, to evaluate and keep a critical eye on the developments. Only by working closely together, EU industry and EU legislators will ensure a successful development towards the new EU plastics economy.

Sufficient investments are important to underpin these several commitments. For this reason, **the plastics industry will provide a meaningful level of resources** to support the development of each commitment. Member companies will provide, directly and indirectly, the resources necessary to achieve the specific projects agreed upon.



Plastic product controlled loop recycling as above is linking the polymer value chains, using recycled plastics materials in the future plastics economy in Europe.



## 3 European Circularity Platforms and Value Chain initiatives

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### 3.1 VinylPlus® (PVC)

VinylPlus® is the voluntary commitment to sustainable development by the European PVC industry value chain. The commitment aims at strengthening the sustainability of PVC products and of the entire industry through a holistic approach including increasing safe and quality PVC recycling. VinylPlus® has already spent over 100 million € since its creation in the year 2000 and has become a concrete example of a voluntary commitment that works in practice and provides a benchmark for other industry initiatives.

We commit to **review the current PVC recycling targets** in 2018 in order to continue the journey we embarked on in the year 2000. The current voluntary PVC recycling volume for **2020 has been set in 2010 at an ambitious level of 800,000 tonnes of PVC recycling per year**. We will

- ✓ set up, in consultation with our stakeholders, a **new up scaled recycling target** in 2018 for 2030 provided the regulatory framework supports this development.
- ✓ continue to report the results in an annual progress report, which is verified and audited by third parties and overseen by the **independent monitoring committee** already in place which is composed of representatives from academia, consumer organisations, Trade Unions, the European Commission as well as the European Parliament, and that guarantees VinylPlus®' transparency and accountability.
- ✓ continue to **contribute yearly around 5 million €** in order to support our commitment beyond 2020 and until 2030.
- ✓ pursue and develop cooperation with EU and national public authorities in innovative sustainability projects.
- ✓ actively engage in efforts to globalise our approach by encouraging similar voluntary sustainable development initiatives elsewhere in the world.

### 3.2 Petcore Europe (PET)

Petcore Europe has been a unique voluntary value chain model for recycling for a better environment since 1993. It has remained unique among all plastic polymers. We have been accompanying, promoting, pushing and pulling the collection, sorting and recycling of national post-consumer PET bottles schemes across Europe. This cooperation within the value chain remains aligned with today's voluntary agreement model for Europe.

Petcore Europe's Technical Committee, workshops, forums and working groups composed of specialists across the value chain have been developing the industry awareness on all aspects of environmental issues: Assessing and testing the recyclability of new products and chemicals in packaging, elaborating appropriate protocols, new sorting methods, setting guidelines, evaluating collection schemes such as deposit (DRS), advising on recycling technologies and anticipating the future requirements.

We already contribute **1,3 million T of r-PET (80% of installed capacity) used in Europe** and commit to continuing the growth of this volume also with the more difficult PET recycling streams such as opaque



bottles or PET multilayer sheets. The Packaging & Packaging Waste Directive revision will drive the industry to look for increasing collection of PET waste, also via for example deposit schemes, in order to enhance the quality of the PET recyclates. We will

- ✓ focus on the overall objective: 100% recycling of collected PET packaging material.
- ✓ commit to **65% recycling and reuse** of PET packaging material collected by 2030.
  - Amongst which, 30% of closed loop
- ✓ continue to commit to **improve** the Circular Economy by influencing the **conditions** for appropriate EU and national **legal frameworks**.
- ✓ develop the requirements for all converters and brand owners to **endorse and apply current as well as future Design for Recycling guidelines**.
- ✓ influence and demand that EPR schemes will provide stable and **standardised, quality sorted PET baled streams**.
- ✓ cooperate in finding innovative solutions or remove obstacles for the **use of standard recycled qualities**.
- ✓ cooperate to develop a **positive contribution outside Europe** using the established tools in the value chain.

### 3.3 Polyolefins Circular Economy Platform Europe (PCEP Europe) (PE/PP)

The Polyolefins industry is currently conducting in-depth stakeholder discussions and a thorough analysis of Europe's polyolefin recycling rates. We will

- ✓ announce in 2018 an ambitious industry wide 2030 roadmap to reach **60% recycling and reuse of the collected Polyolefin (PO) packaging**.
- ✓ work collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders in Europe to have **more than 75% of all PO packaging readily designed-for-recycling by 2030**.
- ✓ work collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders of the waste management value chain in Europe, including municipalities and collection schemes, with the aim to **collect all PO packaging**, to sort them to **produce a high quality/value feedstock for the PO value chain**, in alternative to fossil fuel.
- ✓ prepare an annual reporting system and invite the EU legislators to **challenge and scrutinise** PCEP progress on a yearly basis.
- ✓ set up an independent legal entity **PCEP Europe INPA in January 2018**
- ✓ collect the needed funding to work towards our recycling objectives
- ✓ define **targets in other PO sectors by 2025** and define a specific **EU target for agricultural PO film in 2020**.



### 3.4 Circular Carpet Platform (Polyester, PP and PA)

Carpets are multilayer textile products with different use applications and consequently different product types. Roughly these product types can be split into 3 main groups: **loose laid rugs**, **wall-to-wall floor coverings** and **non-flooring applications** (e.g. automotive, outdoor sport fields and landscaping).

Whereas the first group represents typical **home decoration textiles** the second one represents **textile floor coverings falling under the EU-Construction Products Regulation (CPR)**. The industry sector, represented by ECRA (European Carpet and Rug Association) covers approximately 90% of EU's textile floor coverings production.

Fiber materials used in the carpet industry are mainly polymer based. The use-layers of the textile floorcoverings, depending on the field of application, consist of (79%) **PP, PA-6 & PA-66** and to a minor part of **PET**. The remaining 21% are covered by **wool, jute, cotton and other natural fibres**.

On the way towards a more circular economy the sector has already undertaken serious steps to investigate collecting and sorting strategies for post-consumer carpet waste (PCCW) in different market segments. This will be done collectively or by individual EPR schemes.

Carpets today, and in the past, have been designed for longevity and in many application sectors textile floor coverings will last for 15 to 20 years or even longer. Already 25 years ago the EU carpet industry started its **environmental program** with the founding of GUT (Gemeinschaft umweltfreundlicher Teppichboden e.V.).

Focusing on IAQ (indoor air quality) and HSE (health, safety and environment) related issues during production and use phase, the sector soon started to eliminate dangerous substances and additives, like halogenated flame-retardants or heavy metals. Today due to these sector wide accepted **environmental design concepts** even polymers in legacy products will not contribute to recycle contamination.

Although collection, identification and separation are key technologies, a circular economy can only be realised when the polymers are made available again for re-use at the end of a carpet lifetime.

Therefore, the cooperation and information exchange between the carpet sector on the one side and polymer producers as well as polymer processors on the other side is of great importance. We will

- ✓ set up an **independent legal body**, CRE (Carpet Recycling Europe) by June 2018, which will take care of circularity and sustainability challenges of the EU carpet sector.
- ✓ define **polymer specific recycling targets** in 2019, based on proven calculation models for future available waste streams and polymer contents in carpet waste by setting up a statistical information system targeting specifically at recycling related data.
- ✓ integrate with „**Project 2020**“ for the first time, circular economic and sustainability aspects like **ease of installation, design for recycling** and **end of life performance** into the ongoing **CEN standardisation work**.





- integrate this standardised information in the already existing **voluntary carpet labelling system GUT-PRODIS** (PRODUct Information System) to allow a **transparent communication to private and professional end-users**.
- ✓ accompany these measures by **independent verification processes** and **ongoing studies** to develop the **best available recovery technologies** for polymers in PCCW.
- ✓ set up studies and projects to **develop new production methods** facilitating the recycling of our products concurrently assuring today's **high consumer safety standards**.

### 3.5 Other New Circular Polymer Platforms

We will encourage

- ✓ the setting up of **new additional polymer value chain platforms** that will act in a similar way.
- ✓ that **studies are carried out** to assess the need and potential impact of such new platforms in, for example, the fishing gear industry, the composites industry, or for other thermoset polymers (such as PUR) where mechanical recycling is more difficult and chemical recycling routes should be further explored.

## 4 Uptake of More Recycled Polymers by Converters and Brand Owners

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Plastics converters and compounders commit to use more recycled plastics materials (rPM) in final applications, provided the quality and material availability are secured and that the brand owners or specifiers are willing to request more recyclates in their specifications.

The **leading 10 brand owners** in Europe will be invited **in 2018 to pledge for a certain percentage of intake of recycled polymers in their products**. The list of the committed brand owners together with their pledge will be published towards December 2018.

A regular EU wide on-line survey about the current and future use of plastics recyclates by converters will be published on a yearly basis to demonstrate the growing intake of recycled material in the plastics industry in Europe.

EuPC and PRE will organise **50 specific workshops** between converters and recyclers from **2018 to 2020** all over Europe to improve the current quality level of recycled polymers. We will invite all stakeholders including for example brand owners, waste collectors, retailers and public authorities to join these workshops in order to understand the challenges the industry is facing and to look together for technical solutions.

For communication and dissemination reasons the results and the good practices will be shared with other stakeholders. This includes the use of the *European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform* [www.circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform](http://www.circulareconomy.europa.eu/platform).



Provided that legislators will be able to implement stricter sorting requirements to the Member States at the latest in 2020 and that a sufficient supply of high quality recyclates is available, a specific minimum recycled content for certain agreed applications could be suggested for specific products in public procurement if the value chain agrees upon its implementation. We will therefore publish in 2020 a European catalogue of **at least 500 plastic (semi-finished) products available in the market, that contain 50% or more of recycled polymers.**

## 5 The Advisory Committee

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The advisory committee will be composed of senior members from the European Commission, European Parliament, Academia, NGOs, civil society and representatives of each of the Circularity Platforms and Value Chain Initiatives, as well as the plastics industry's representatives at EU level. Its role will be to evaluate the progress on a yearly basis, especially with regard to the 4 EU regulatory requirements mentioned below.

## 6 Interaction with EU Regulation

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The EU plastics industry is not able to achieve these ambitious targets on its own. To truly develop a more circular plastics industry, to improve its competitiveness and to create jobs and growth in Europe, we need the support and collaboration of the EU authorities. **We call upon the European Commission to prioritise the following EU regulatory measures:**

1

*A full implementation of all EU waste directives in the European Union by 2030.*

2

*Maintenance of the EU internal market (including for single use plastics) as a legal basis for the EU Packaging & Packaging Waste Directive after the ongoing revision process.*

3

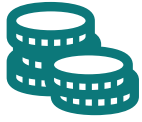
*Secure the full potential of plastics recycling of longer life applications into controlled loops by a risk based approach with traceability of legacy additives.*

4

*Unlock as soon as possible (9 years after it came into force) the EU “administrative” situation regarding the finalisation and full implementation of the Food Contact Regulation 282/2008.*



Under the above conditions, we, as an industry in Europe, agree to implement the following voluntary actions, additionally to all our other existing EU legal compliance requirements:



We agree to financially contribute to each of the aforementioned EU circular polymer platforms / value chain initiatives. Furthermore, we agree to set up appropriate, evolving and ambitious targets to increase recycling and develop quality standards for recyclates.



We will work in all of these circular platforms and value chain initiatives jointly with all stakeholders. This includes designers, architects, brand owners or specifiers to ensure a wider development of our activity and a common understanding of the important goals set.



We will develop a reporting format which aims at facilitating the targets' monitoring. It will as well create a platform to report potential measurements of activities to influence the progression of the developments.

## 7 Conclusion

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These challenging voluntary commitments will enable the plastics industry to strive for the best possible solutions to maximise the potential of the different polymer types for a more circular economy. Thanks to strong collaborations across the whole value chain, the participating companies and associations will ensure that a new dimension for a more sustainable plastics economy is created in Europe. These specific efforts will form the core of the activities of the European Plastics Industry.

*Brussels 16<sup>th</sup> January 2018*

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