

# **“How to apply for the voluntary PLEDGES to boost the uptake of recycled plastics ?”**

**Background note to the Workshops organised by the European Commission**

**March 2018, Brussels**

## **Scene setter**

The EU Plastics Strategy published on 16 January 2018 launched an EU-wide voluntary pledging campaign addressed to industry and public authorities to increase the uptake in recycled plastics in new products placed on the EU market.

To achieve swift, tangible results, this exercise is addressed to both private and public actors, inviting them to come forward with substantive pledges by 30 June 2018.

The Commission is taking the initiative to organize 4 workshops or information sessions addressed to the 4 industrial sectors which are the most demanding as regards plastic materials: packaging, building and construction, automotive and electronic/domestic appliances.

The **principal aim** of these workshops will be to update industrials with the latest information about the pledging exercise and to receive feedback. Among the points to address will be the format of data expected.

## **Policy context**

Promoting efficient use of resources makes a lot of sense for business, and should help improve its competitiveness and profitability. The transition towards the circular economy calls for systemic changes that facilitate the emergence of radically new business models, value chains and industrial structures. The circular economy is not only about environmental protection and sustainability; it is also about creating new business opportunities and making Europe's industry more competitive.

By adopting the Plastics Strategy the Commission has set 3 main objectives:

- to improve the economics and quality of plastic recycling, ensuring a stable market for recycled plastics with clear growth perspectives;
- to ensure new economic opportunities combined with social innovation; and
- to curb plastic waste and littering.

## **Boosting demand for recycled plastics**

Weak demand for recycled plastics is one of the major obstacles to transforming the plastics value chain.

The uptake of recycled plastics in new products is low and often remains limited to low-value or niche applications. Recycled plastics today only account for about 4-6% of the EU demand for new plastics materials, representing appr. 3.5 million tonnes / year. Uncertainties concerning market outlets and profitability are holding back the investment necessary to scale up and modernise EU plastics recycling capacity and boost innovation.

While certain actions of the Plastics Strategy will stimulate measures to support recyclability

such as design for recyclability and better sorting of plastics wastes, including regulatory amendments, standardization works and better implementation of existing tools (e.g. Waste Framework Directive), a particular action aims at directly boosting the uptake of recycled plastics in products manufactured in Europe.

This is the **EU-wide pledging campaign for the uptake of recycled plastics**.

**The objective is to ensure that by 2025 ten million tonnes of recycled plastics find their way into new products on the EU market.**

This represents a significant increase compared to the current situation (3,5 million tonnes of recycled plastics incorporated in products produced in the EU in 2015).

The pledges received will be the basis for an assessment by the Commission, including of possible next steps, including regulatory action, to promote the uptake of recycled plastics in the EU.

### Annex III to the Plastics Strategy

Annex III to the Strategy gives more detail on this initiative:

- 1. The European Commission calls on stakeholders to come forward with voluntary pledges to boost the uptake of recycled plastics. The objective is to ensure that by 2025 ten million tonnes of recycled plastics find their way into new products on the EU market.*
- 2. Interested companies and/or industry associations have until 30 June 2018 to submit their pledges to the following email address: GROW-ENV-RPLASTICS-PLEDGE@ec.europa.eu*
- 3. When sending in their pledges, stakeholders are asked to provide the European Commission with data illustrating how their pledge contributes to achieving the quantitative objective set in paragraph 1. Such data will be treated confidentially and will be used exclusively for the purpose of monitoring overall progress towards the quantitative objective. Pledges will be put under quality check, and assessed against their reliability and ability to meet declared deadlines.*
- 4. When sending in their pledges on recycled content, stakeholders are welcome to make pledges covering other aspects which are relevant to the strategy, such as design for recyclability.*
- 5. The pledges received will be made public through a dedicated webpage.*
- 6. By 31 October 2018, the Commission will present an assessment of the pledges received and their overall contribution to the quantitative objective set in paragraph 1. Should the contribution be deemed insufficient, the Commission will start work on possible next steps, including regulatory action.*

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## Guidelines for candidate applicants to the pledging campaign

### 1. What type of pledges are we expecting?

The key focus of the pledging exercise is on the **uptake of recycled content** in products. Pledges are expected from those European Actors of the Plastic Value Chain who are using plastic polymers to convert/manufacture products, articles or parts of them.

This could mean individual companies which are buying either plastic resins, either plastic products/articles/parts to sell on their own other commercial products or services.

A few examples:

- A manufacturer of cars or a manufacturer of fuel tanks/bumpers/seats
- A manufacturer of domestic appliances, printers, or ink cartridges
- A manufacturer of window frames, doors or floorings, insulation material
- A manufacturer of plastic bags, trays, bottles

It could also mean a national or a European federation representing a group of those economic actors, for instance, the European food retailers association.

It is of course important to avoid that the pledge made by an individual member of an association are accounted as part of the pledge of this association ('double counting').

In order to avoid this **double counting** as much as possible, applicants for pledges which are manufacturing products, articles, parts sold to other actors in the value chain should provide some indications of their customers down the value chain.

Similarly those applicants who are pledging for products placed as such on the market (the final actor before the consumer) should provide some indications of their suppliers up in the value chain.

Federation applying for a pledge on behalf of a group of operators shall at least name their contributing members and indicate their respective part in the federation's pledge.

#### **Reason for the pledge:**

Those potential applicants described above would apply as soon as they are deciding to support the objectives of the Plastics Strategy in a Circular Economy.

In particular the applicants shall commit to replace partly or fully the primary (or "virgin") plastic polymers by secondary plastic polymers, thus issued from recycling of plastic wastes in the products/articles/parts that they are manufacturing/buying/procuring/....

So they will pledge to declare that they wish to use **more recycled plastics** (main aim). For example, an applicant will declare that his PET bottles will contain xx% of recycled PET by 2025 and yy% by 2030.

It should be noted that **in addition** :

- Public or private actors may also indicate their pledges for **procuring** for plastic products/articles/parts in their business. For example, a company of public transport procuring for buses, taxis, train wagons... a Ministry/the EU Commission procuring for office materials... a building company or a public housing/equipment department procuring for building materials... a retailing company, a food retailer companies, a supermarket company, public canteens procuring for (reusable) packaging, for packed food/drinks/meals...
- Private actors may also indicate **complementary pledges**, e.g. when they are committing to increase **recyclability** of plastic products/articles/parts that they are manufacturing.

## 2. Where and by when applying for a pledge?

There is one single portal for sending the pledges by 30 June 2018:

All information shall be sent to the functional mailbox:

[GROW-ENV-RPLASTICS-PLEDGE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:GROW-ENV-RPLASTICS-PLEDGE@ec.europa.eu)

A message confirming the good receipt of the pledge will be sent to the applicant by the coordinator of the functional mailbox. This may be accompanied by some questions to the applicant to complement the information it provided initially.

### 3. What kind of information shall be declared when applying for a pledge?

The Commission will consider that a pledge as acceptable when it contains at least the following information:

- **Identity** of the applicant(s): Name of the company or name of the association/federation (accompanied with a description of the membership and its representativeness in terms of market share).
- **Object(s)**: Description of the product(s)/article(s)/part(s) subject to the pledge and allocation to one of these groups: **packaging**, **building/construction**, **automotive**, electric/electronic/domestic appliances, others (please specify).

Commercial name of the product/article might be provided if it helps to identify the object of the pledge.

In case the same company pledges for several products, please give all specific details as mentioned below for each product concerned by the pledge.

- **Polymer**: Chemical name of the plastic polymer(s) contained in the object concerned by the pledge.  
In case the pledge concerns an object containing multiple polymers, give all specific details as mentioned below for each polymer concerned by the pledge.

- **Baseline (June 2018):**

- Percentage of the polymer compared to the total weight of the object concerned by the pledge.

- **Pledge:**

- Percentage of recycled polymer compared to the total content of this polymer in the object concerned by the pledge.
- Specify the percentage by 2025, but also milestones until 2025 so as to show regular progress.

- **Quantities:**

- Declare the quantities (tons) of recycled polymer necessary per year to fulfil the pledge.

- **Quality:**

- Declare the quality grade that you are expecting for the recycled polymer to be incorporated in the object.

Identity	Object	Polymer	Nature	Baseline	Pledge	Quantities	Quality
Company BREYDEL	Bottles of "Breydel- coke" (25 cl up to 2 litres)	PET	Recycled content	100% of PET (= 120 tons PET)	50% of recycled PET by 2025	60 Tons recycled PET/year by 2025	Food contact materials grade
Windows GROW GmbH	Window- frames and doors	PVC	Recycled content	90% of PVC in windows (=10 tons of PVC/year)  85% of PVC in doors (=54 tons of PVC/year)	40% of recycled PVC by 2025  50% of recycled PVC by 2030	2025: 4+22 Tons rPVC  2030: 5+27 Tons rPVC	No importance.

To illustrate this, please find some examples in the tables below:

A final template will be circulated shortly (possibly under the form of an Excel Sheet).

#### 4. Confidential treatment of information and aggregation of data?

The Commission will aggregate the information submitted by applicant per polymer and per group of objects (packaging, construction, automotive, appliances, others) and publish the figures of the pledges as well as the names of the applicants or federations without indicating the quantities concerned by their respective pledge.

This information will be made publically available on a dedicated page of the website set up by DG GROW and DG ENV in the context of the Circular Economy Platforms, where stakeholders have been invited to come forward with circular economy-related commitments.

Optionally, the applicant for the pledge may also be providing the information that he/she accepts to make public in a separate dossier to be published on the website.