

PRESS RELEASE

The new EU Circular Economy Package fails to support the European plastic recycling industry

Brussels, 23 December - Today the European Commission published [a set of pilot actions](#) to accelerate Europe's transition to a circular economy, the so-called 'Winter-package', with a particular focus on plastics. While the initiative comes at a critical moment for Europe's plastic recycling sector, **it fails to include provisions to boost demand and prioritize European-made recycled content.**

The Commission presents the Package as an urgent response to the crisis in the plastics recycling sector, citing fragmented markets, high energy costs, volatile virgin plastic prices and unfair competition from third countries. **Europe's plastics recycling industry is experiencing its deepest downturn on record**, with a net decrease of around one million tonnes of recycling capacity in Europe by the end of 2025. This happens at the very same time as the ban on EU plastic waste exports to non-OECD countries enters into force.

FEAD takes note of the Commission's focus on end-of-waste criteria, recycled content rules for PET bottles and enhanced monitoring of imports. At the same time, these proposals are not new to the sector. The Commission has been working on most of these measures for a long time, and they are largely part of the ongoing development of the EU legislative framework for the circular economy. While the proposals go in the right direction, they do not respond to the *immediate* needs of the recycling sector. **Without European sourcing requirements and effective mirror clauses, mandatory recycled content targets risk being met through imports rather than supporting recycling within Europe**, weakening domestic capacity and falling short of the Package's own objectives.

'The absence of a clear 'Made in Europe' clause to recycled content in **the Commission-Package is a missed opportunity**,' stated Paolo Campanella, Secretary General of FEAD. 'At a time when the European plastic recycling industry is facing an unprecedented crisis, this sends a clearly insufficient signal to the market. It does not provide the immediate and concrete support that recyclers urgently need to survive and continue investing.'

In a [joint call](#) submitted ahead of the package publication, FEAD, Plastics Recyclers Europe and Recycling Europe urged the Commission to ensure that recycled plastic used to meet EU targets is sourced from post-consumer waste collected and recycled within Europe, and that equivalent requirements apply to imported products through robust mirror clauses.

FEAD regrets that these elements were not reflected in the Winter Package and urges the European Commission, the European Parliament and Member States to address this gap swiftly in the forthcoming legislative negotiations, including the preparation of the Circular

Economy Act. **Placing European recyclates at the forefront of European markets is essential to preserve recycling capacity**, maintain high environmental standards and deliver on the EU's circular economy ambitions.

FEAD is the European Waste Management Association, representing the private waste and resource management industry across Europe, including 20 national waste management federations and 3,000 waste management companies. Private waste management companies operate in 60% of municipal waste markets in Europe and in 75% of industrial and commercial waste. This means more than 500,000 local jobs, fuelling €5 billion of investments into the economy every year. For more information, please contact: info@fead.be
