



Warszawa, 12.11.2013

The position of the Polish Union of Plastic Converters on the proposal of European Commission regarding lightweight plastic shopping bags

Polish Union of Plastic Converters totals employment of about 8 thousand people and an annual turnover of over 5 billion. We are a member of European Plastics Converters Association (EuPC) and the Confederation of Employers Lewiatan.

Union have a critical approach to the proposals of the European Union regarding the so-called light plastic shopping bags with a thickness less than 50 microns. EU proposal aims to reduce the consumption of bags by allowing a derogation from Article 18 of Directive 94/62/EC, which currently regulates the freedom to place packages on the market. PUPC supports the initiative to reduce the irresponsible conduct of the packaging, including lightweight plastic bags for shopping. We promote the re-use of plastic bags and increasing the level of recovery and recycling to reduce the overall negative impact on the environment. At the same time we can not agree with the proposal of discrimination of plastic products and we believe that it violates the fundamental principles of the internal market.

In our opinion, the EU should do more to support voluntary initiatives such as the V Bags Europe, the voluntary commitment of the industry to regulate trading and limit the amount of entering the EU plastic bags (<http://www.europeanplasticfilms.eu/vbags-europe>).

We believe that the European Commission's proposal is a clear violation of the principle of proportionality, the proposal aims to reduce the consumption of "lightweight plastic bags," but may allow situations in which Member States may prohibit the use of these products.

According to the Union this proposal is to legalize the situation in Italy, where the only biodegradable and compostable bags are admitted to trading. Legislation in Italy favours to distribute bioplastics than conventional polymers, without taking into account the life of the product, where it is known that even a small amount of biopolymers can contaminate a larger batch of plastic, making it unfit for recycling. EU proposal legalizes this type of action. However biodegradable handbags can also be the cause of littering the environment and will not biodegrade in a short time both terrestrial and marine.

In some EU countries such as Germany, there is no problem of pollution by plastic bags. Nowadays in Germany 98% of plastic packaging is recovered. This is due to an effective recovery system supported by PET bottles deposits and high environmental awareness of German society.

Poland is still in the implementation phase of the relevant regulations, however, in our opinion, an adequate recovery system with proper support for recycling, along with a simultaneous public education will lead to satisfactory results. Excluding or discrimination of certain products or packaging will not cause the expected results. In addition, studies indicate, that plastic bags are weight less than 1% of all packaging placed on the market, from the point of view of waste packaging is quite marginal.

Referring to the European Commission assessment of CO2 emissions reduction in the case of the ban on the use of lightweight plastic bags for shopping, we would like to point out along with EuPC (European Association of Plastics Converters) significant error in the information. The European Commission says that if the ban will reduce CO2 emissions by 147.6 million tons. In fact, the correct number is 1.44 million tons, a hundred times less, which significantly changes the image of the report.

Polish Union of Plastics Converters is ready to cooperate with state authorities to maintain adequate levels of entering and consumption of light plastic bags for shopping (office@tworzywa.org.pl).

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