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The position of the Polish Union of Plastics Converters on the EU regulations concerning reduction of plastic carrier bags usage

On 21 October the UE 28 members representatives voted in favor on the agreement reached between European Parliament and Council concerning reduction of carrier bags usage.

New regulations exclude carrier bags with thickness below 50 microns from the Packaging Directive, what gives freedom to Member States in the development of national legislation on the use of bags, as well as freedom to implement reductions in entering the bags on the market. This results in a risk of such extreme measures as in Italy, where the use of plastic bags has been banned, instead of introducing an effective enough and tight postconsumer waste management system (such as in Germany), in which additional regulations are unnecessary..

Association supports the approach that only support of environmentally friendly consumer behavior is the key to success, and thus reduce the level of non-recoverable waste. Without this support, no limits on producers and consumers will not be effective and will not allow for a permanent change in this area.

Polish Union of Plastics Converters supports all actions to a more responsible use and re-use of plastic bags in the countries of the EU. We promote the re-use of plastic carrier bags and increasing their level of recovery and recycling on the way of completely neutral impact on the environment. The complexity of the regulations and the number of restrictions are not favorable for companies and may lead to stop investing in the packaging industry in the Member States of the Union. It should be noted that in the plastics processing industry in the EU there are 1.2 million employees.

In summary, the currently agreed text is far from the idea of "better regulation" as excessively complex and as a result that could have a negative impact on the EU economy. Therefore, in the opinion of PUPC it should be amended.

According to us it is obvious that, if this text is adopted as final, we will go back much in the way of common rules for the EU market for packaging manufacturers and we will not solve a significant problem involving consumer education and effective reuse of materials. It is also worth mentioning that the new regulations would add to the burden on public authorities in relation to the need to monitor the use of bags per capita and the implementation of appropriate adjustment in case of any deviations.

In the opinion of PUPC, the EU should do more to support initiatives such as V Bags Europe, which is a voluntary industry commitment of plastic bags manufacturers in the EU to regulate the market and reduce the amount entering the plastic bags

([http://www.europeanplasticfilms.eu / vbags-europe](http://www.europeanplasticfilms.eu/vbags-europe)). The EU institutions should cooperate with industry, and not work against it.

Poland is currently in the process of implementation of the legislation on waste management. In our opinion, the only effective recovery system, properly supporting recycling, along with a simultaneous public education will lead to satisfactory results. Disabling or discriminate against certain products or packaging will not cause the expected results.

PUPC will continue to promote a mandatory fee for bags in retail sales (instead of free handouts). Such activities may be more beneficial for the environment and the economy than the use of drastic regulations, causing disruption of the market. We are ready to cooperate with authorities in order to maintain appropriate levels of implementation and recovery of plastic carrier bags.

Polish Union of Plastics Converters also proposes to develop and implement a long term education policy for the conduct of management - it seems that without such measures ecological behavior cannot be developed

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