

European recyclers versus plastics manufacturers

## Questionable figures

The "green book" published at the end of March by PlasticsEurope (the association of plastics manufacturers contains questionable data on plastics recycling - according to EuPR (European Plastics Recyclers). The figures appear to be expressing a percentage of plastics waste for collection and not recycling. Saying that recycling levels of 60% are achieved in Germany is nonsense. This figure includes energy recovery, feed stock recycling and mechanical recycling.

On top of this the figures do not distinguish between collection, export and recycling in Europe nor does the report differentiate between production waste and post-consumer waste. EuPR members represent 80% of the recycling capacity in Europe and the association has been collaborating with PlasticsEurope for the recycling figures of 2004 and asked them to wait for final consultation, before publishing this report. According to the recyclers, the recycling levels for post-consumer plastics waste went down last year and the export flows are continuing to damage their business. EuPR believes that the overall plastics mechanical recycling rates for all applications in Europe is only 4.1%, 2.2 million tons processed waste in the EU. This percentage must be seen in relation to the production of plastics raw material placed on the European market in the EU, which is above 50 million tons per year.

EuPR intends to conduct its own report and inform the EU legislator about the real figures. If the EU Commission, the European Parliament and the member states want a model European Recycling Society then they should call upon the plastic producers to take up their responsibilities by initiating the plastics waste/recycling directive.

This EU directive has been sitting on the Commission desk for several years now but has been blocked by the strong lobby of the petrochemical companies. Only by fixing material specific recycling targets for plastics recycling will we achieve the proper levels in Europe. Today an average (packaging) post-consumer mechanical recycling level below 16% is achieved in the EU. More can be done in specific plastics waste streams, such as industrial packaging, agricultural film, bumpers, electronics and industrial film in order to increase the overall 4.1% which is very low.

[www.eupr.org](http://www.eupr.org)

## Excellent collection

The latest annual meeting of Conai (Consorzio Nazionale Imballaggi), held on April 12 in Milan, approved the 2005 balance and managing report. Conai is an Italian private consortium of companies operating in the recovery and recycle of packaging issued for consumption on the Italian territory, and aimed at meeting statutory targets. It guarantees target achievement at the lowest economic cost of all the European consortia, working as a market subsidiary. Conai works through 6 material consortia - including plastics, steel, aluminium, paper, wood and glass - which ensure the necessary links with local administrations for the

## Clean city

After the success of Plastic 4 The House - the competition started in 2004 with the results announced at the Furniture Salon 2005 in Milan - the second edition is now at its conclusion: Plastic 4 The Clean City - promoted by Corspla (the Italian consortium for collection, recovery and recycle of post-consumer plastic packaging) in collaboration with Casavogue.

The theme tackled in the competition by the young students of design, both Italian and foreign, was far from easy: sustainability in the modern city, which now more than ever is fragmented and uncertain. Mush 7, Bench Parking, Clear View, Silline and Space are the



titles of the award winning projects which tackled the theme proposed with hard facts and functional realism, without falling prey to the easy lures of formalism and the merely decorative. The entries join a marketplace - the urban design sector - which is already crowded, but distinguish themselves by proposing real interaction with the user, for use in an urban world where communication, people and dialogue are important. From Mush 7, the winning mushroom - the archetypal form with echoes of primordial and collective protection - to the many variations on the classic theme of the park bench, the common desire expressed in

take-back of packaging from separate collection. Some interesting figures released at the above mentioned meeting are summarized below. First of all, sorted collection on a national scale is 25% approx. It is interesting if compared with 11% recorded on 1998 and it encourages the increase of recovered and recycled quantities. But in 2005, for the first year after an uninterrupted growth, packaging brought in consumption, slowed down. The 0.2% increase is just symbolic and a result of contrasting trends.

The figures estimated for the first year of activity under the new agreement between Conai and ANCI (the association for Italian municipalities) for the development of sorted collection and packaging recovery display a significant growth in the collection of packaging waste. The latter reached 3 million tons, with a 34% increase versus 2002. The whole increase of collection also determined the growth of quantities managed by chain consortia. Such quantities grew

by 13.6% per year and 76% since 2002 to nowadays. Last year more than 6.6 million tons of packaging were initiated to material recovery and new products, with a growth of 3.5% approx, i.e. 221,000 tons more than in 2004. The growth of recycled volumes derives from public sorted collection which grew by 5.2%. Packaging waste initiated to energy recovery is 1.1 million tons approx, representing 14.6% of the whole recovery, which was attested at 65% of total consumer packaging (7.75 million tons). An important aim which allowed reducing down to 35% the waste still disposed in landfill. In such a volume the incidence of plastics exceeded 15%, or 1.2 million tons, and 4% growth versus 2004. This is an extraordinary result considering a peculiarity of the material: the inherent lightweight and the constant lightening of packaging, thanks to the technological sophistication for producing films, bottles etc.

[www.conai.org](http://www.conai.org)