

Plastics recovery reach 50% and growth in demand outpace GDP by 50%

The plastics industry publishes its 17th report on trends in production, demand and recovery of plastics called the "Compelling Facts about Plastics 2006". The report can be downloaded in pdf format or ordered in printed form from the partners

2006 was the year when recovery of plastics reached the 50% for the first time. Underpinned by strong growth in mechanical recycling as well as energy recovery resulted in 3% points increase over 2005. This was achieved in a year with a strong growth in demand - 4% - to a total of 49.5 million tonnes across EU25+NO,CH exceeding GDP by 50%.

7 countries (representing 29% of the population in EU25+NO/CH) recover more than 80% of their used plastics and are near realising their divert from landfill vision.

The key observations for 2006 are:

Demand growth outpace GDP by 50%

Demand in EU25+N,CH grew by 4% over 2005, exceeding GDP by 50% to reach 49.5 million tonnes up from 47.5 million tonnes in 2005. Globally demand grew to 245 million tonnes, up from 235 million tonnes in 2005.

Plastics are now recovered to 50%

Half of all post-consumer plastics ending up as waste were recovered either as recycling or as energy recovery. Recycling rates increased to 19.7% and energy recovery rates to 30.3%.

Divert from landfill vision comes through

Countries like Switzerland, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Austria, Netherlands and Belgium recover more than 80% of their waste. They are all near to realize diversion from landfill.

Recovery progress however remains slow amongst countries with lower rates. Still half of the Member States recover less than 30%. This partly reflects the slow political process and partly the long lead times for energy recovery options.

Again it is proven that good performance on energy recovery is not contradictory to good performance on recycling.

Despite quantity of used plastics increased, the amount going to landfill continued to drop

Driven by economic development and increased substitution by plastics in a range of applications the quantity of post-consumer plastics waste increased by 1 million tonnes- or 4% - over 2005. However thanks to the strong increase in recovery the quantity going to landfill fell by 1%.

This confirms the observation since a few years that:

There is decoupling of economic growth and plastics going to landfill.

Mechanical recycling grew 18% and energy recovery grew 9% over 2005

Driven by increasing virgin material prices, improved collection and sorting technology, improved schemes and strong demand, mechanical recycling saw an accelerating growth. Compared to the past trend the increase nearly doubled in 2006. Applications driving this growth include traditional streams like bottles and film but also e.g. window profiles. Capacity for closed loop recycling is being installed in a number of countries.

Energy recovery saw the historic growth continue in 2006 reflecting that this option require longer lead times and is hence less responsive to market drivers.

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Note to editors:

This report has been produced in partnership between *PlasticsEurope*, EuPC, EuPR and EPRO.

The European plastics industry makes a significant contribution to the welfare in Europe by enabling innovation, creating quality of life to citizens and facilitating resource efficiency and climate protection. More than 1.6 million people are working in about 50.000 companies (mainly small and medium sized companies in the converting sector) to create a turnover in excess of 280 billion € per year.

PlasticsEurope is one of the leading European trade associations with centers in Brussels, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Milan and Paris. We are networking with European and national plastics associations and have more than 100 member companies, producing over 90% of all polymers across the EU27 member states plus Norway, Switzerland, Croatia and Turkey.

EuPC – European Plastics Converters - is the professional representative body of plastics converters within Europe whose activity embraces all sectors of the plastics converting industry including recycling. The overall objective is to defend and promote the interests of the European plastics converting industry

- Voicing the industry's opinion towards European and international institutions and non-governmental organisations;
- Maintaining relationships with corresponding organisations in Europe and worldwide;
- Carrying out business surveys, studies and research projects in all aspects of the plastics processing industry.

EuPR- European Plastics Recyclers - is the professional representative body of plastics recyclers in Europe. EuPR promotes plastics mechanical recycling and conditions that enable profitable and sustainable business, while offering a service platform to its members. EuPR members bring together 85% of the European recycling capacity processing more than 2.5 million tonnes of collected plastics per year.

EPRO is the association of the national organisations charged with organising and promoting recycling and recovery of plastics throughout Europe. EPRO provides a unique forum for the leading specialists in plastics waste management from across Europe to exchange learning, develop integrated plastics packaging waste strategies and support technological development.