

## EXPRA Position on Littering

### Key messages

**EXPRA considers that a multi-faceted approach is required to address littering effectively. This includes suitable legislative framework conditions as well as public awareness and education, combined with sound waste management and appropriate collection infrastructure. Within this realm, it is imperative that industry co-finances the costs for waste management issues that fall under its remit and control. This explicitly excludes litter clean-up since littering is directly linked to consumer misbehaviour.**

There is no place for litter in a circular economy where waste is treated like a resource. EXPRA (Extended Producer Responsibility Alliance) supports the EU's efforts to accelerate the transition towards a circular economy and a zero waste society. For that shift to be accomplished, measures aimed at reducing and preventing littering must be incorporated into the circular economy framework, both at the EU and national level. However, it should be noted that while significant amounts of waste continue to be littered in the EU, the exact amounts are unclear. This ought to be researched further, so that it can be ensured that the policy responses to this problem is the most accurate and appropriate.

It should be fully recognised that littering is first and foremost a societal problem. The latter results from poor citizen behaviour and dysfunctional waste management systems, such as badly managed landfills which spill waste into the environment, including seas and oceans. Regardless of the source, litter is problematic from an environmental perspective, and also very costly for society to clean up.

EXPRA considers that a multi-faceted approach is required to address littering effectively. This includes suitable legislative framework conditions as well as public awareness and education, combined with sound waste management and appropriate collection infrastructure.

The littering problem can only be resolved through the collective efforts of all stakeholders involved, including the EU institutions. However, it is very important that both the EU and the Member States' waste legislation do not attribute waste management's total costs to industry, particularly for issues beyond its remit and control, including littering.

The following recommendations are aimed at promoting sound resource management and awareness, both at the EU and national level, in order to address littering:

#### **1. Set the right legislative framework conditions at EU level**

Littering should build on the Polluter-Pays-Principle, as all stakeholders within the value chain have a role to play within littering prevention. Producers are particularly active in the field of prevention, increased reusability and recyclability, which render waste management effective.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) makes producers responsible for the recovery and recycling of the products that they have placed on the market. This approach provides incentives for manufacturers to incorporate an environmental perspective into the design of these products. Fewer packaging elements are hence placed on the market, thereby reducing waste that could have otherwise been littered. In this realm, it is imperative that industry bears the costs for waste management issues that fall under their remit and control. This explicitly excludes litter clean-up since littering is directly linked to consumer misbehaviour.

Ultimately, EU waste legislation should be fit for purpose and up to date for the successful collection, recovery and recycling of waste to occur properly. The EPR principle should explicitly be recognised through strong and clear minimum requirements that define, inter alia, the roles and responsibilities of all actors involved in EPR schemes.

## ***2. Ensure legislative enforcement and monitoring***

At the national level, efforts should focus on implementing EU waste legislation appropriately, and adequate anti-littering legislation. Local authorities, in particular, should ensure suitable out-of-home waste collection infrastructure, notably enough collection containers in public spaces. Further attention also needs to be placed on ensuring that littering is under no circumstances considered a socially accepted behaviour. While monitoring is believed to contribute to littering prevention, it should be made a higher priority that public officials implement control and fining. Authorities should moreover implement mandatory litter clean-up in an effective and efficient manner.

A comprehensive framework, comprising long-term policy strategies as well as enhanced cooperation with the waste management industry, can help bolster sustainable waste management.

## ***3. Educational and information campaigns***

Cleaning up litter, both on land and in marine environments, is expensive. Therefore, preventive measures are vital to save litter clean-up costs and contribute to littering control on a permanent basis. Regarding the marine environment, marine debris is a problem with a clear international dimension, affecting all oceans. This debris has various sources and causes, littering being one of them. In light of this, EU Member States should be further encouraged to share best practices of consumer campaigns on litter reduction and prevention also with non EU countries. This should be part of broader support aimed to improve waste management practices in third countries.

Information and education are crucial to driving changes in consumer behaviour in the long term. This entails raising anti-littering awareness amongst consumers, tapping into the importance of separate waste collection and waste infrastructure use to its full potential.

The environmental impact, alongside the economic costs related to littering removal, should be at the core of this educational approach. Also, local and regional circumstances should be considered when designing these campaigns. In addition, the public should be made aware of littering consequences given that items that end up in the sea can have a harmful impact on animals as well as the environment.

Producers and producer responsibility organisations across Europe are already very active in supporting anti-littering campaigning and clean-up initiatives. They effectively provide consumers with information on how and why they should separately sort their waste and avoid littering.

It needs to be reiterated, within this context, that companies are not the main source of littering. Packaging waste that is either littered or ends up within municipal solid waste is the result of inadequate use, by the consumer, of the existing infrastructure for separate collection.

\*\*\*\*\*