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INTRODUCTION BY THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

Dear reader,

Welcome to the EXPRA newsletter!

As always, we are pleased to share with you a selection of updates of recent EXPRA activities, EU developments of relevance to the packaging and recycling sectors as well as inspiring updates from our members.

EPR continues to be high on the waste management agenda. Not only in Brussels, where work is ongoing to finalise a study commissioned by DG Environment, but also in various EU Member States. EXPRA was for example recently speaking an event at the Czech Parliament on the matter. EPR has been acknowledged by the Commission as an instrument that can contribute to shifting waste streams to more sustainable paths. It is important that the potential of this waste management tool is taken into account across the different waste management initiatives that the Commission is currently working on. In this regard, EXPRA would welcome proposals from the Commission that would harmonise definitions and contribute to promoting the optimal use of EPR schemes across Europe.

Ways to reduce plastic bag use is another topic under intense discussion in Brussels, with MEPs adopting their draft legislative resolution on the topic in plenary just days before the European Parliament went into recess. EXPRA’s position paper on the matter stresses that we see very high potential in initiatives involving the business sector to reduce the use of lightweight plastic bags. Voluntary agreements with retailers are a sustainable solution in order to reduce the use of lightweight plastic bags and one that can prove to be more effective than restrictive measures. In this regard, I recommend you to read the story by our Canadian member EEQ on page 11. Due to the Voluntary Code of Best Practices for the Use of Shopping Bags, developed by Éco Entreprises Québec (ÉEQ) together with the government and associations of retailers and distributors, Quebec exceeded the government’s 50% shopping bag reduction target two years ahead of schedule!

You will find many more interesting stories on the pages to follow.

Enjoy your reading!

With best regards,

Joachim Quoden
Managing Director of EXPRA
EXPRA news

EPR WORKSHOP AT THE CZECH PARLIAMENT

On 10 April, CICPEN (Czech Industrial Coalition for Packaging and Environment), together with the Chair of the Environmental Committee of the Czech Parliament, organised a one-day conference in Prague about current developments in the (packaging) waste sector.

The managing director of EXPRA was invited to give a presentation on the implementation of the Packaging Directive in EU Member States, with a focus on concrete examples from Germany, Poland, Slovenia and Belgium. In addition, Virginia Janssens, managing director of EUROPEN, provided the audience with an update on the European developments in the field of waste legislation and the respective views of EUROPEN.

The conference was attended by about 60 participants coming from the Czech Parliament, Ministry of Environment, industry, NGO's and local authorities. The achievements of the current system as well as possible consequences of a change in this system were discussed in great detail.

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EPR CONFERENCE IN BUDAPEST

On 1 April, the managing director of EXPRA was invited to give a presentation on the topic: “How is EPR progressing in Europe” during the conference “New packaging recovery and recycling targets in the EU” organised by RECOMPLEX. Recomplex is the association of all existing and former Hungarian EPR compliance schemes for the different waste streams, including EXPRA's cooperation partner Öko Pannon.
The background to the conference was the decision by the Hungarian government to move away from the EPR waste management approach and instead start implementing a so-called product fee and set up a state agency (called OHÜ) to collect the fees and to coordinate the collection and recycling activities. The government also nationalised many private companies in the municipal waste sector.

In addition to EXPRA’s managing director, Virginia Janssens from EUROPEN, Paul Christiaens from the Dutch EXPRA member Nedvang, and Joris Nachtergaele from MPE, all gave presentations about their point of view on the current developments in Europe and best practices. Among other things, the negative effects of a tax were highlighted and cooperation with the financing of an EPR system was named as a solution in other countries with a packaging tax system.
News Updates

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTS LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION ON WASTE SHIPMENTS

The European Parliament Plenary has voted on the draft legislative resolution on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006 on shipment of waste by Rapporteur Bart Staes (Greens-EFA, BE) (see here for the adopted text). It was adopted by 524 votes in favour, 12 against and 41 abstentions.

An important aim of amending the waste shipments regulation is to counter the phenomenon of ‘port hopping’, whereby exporters ship illegal waste through those Member States with the least effective control measures. The legislative resolution follows the compromise agreement reached between the Council Presidency and European Parliament representatives on 6 March, which was endorsed by COREPER on 12 March (see here) and by the European Parliament Committee on Environment on 19 March.

The text of the legislative resolution harmonises inter alia the enforcement of EU legislation by setting minimum requirements for inspection plans. Prior to formulating their inspection plans Member States will carry out risk assessments, which are further defined in the text.

Moreover, the text also significantly enhances the powers of inspection authorities and makes cooperation between Member States mandatory, which includes the exchange of information.

Furthermore, transparency is promoted by obligating Member states to publish their inspection plans. The first plans have to be prepared by January 2017 and will be reviewed every three years.

Next steps:
- 6 May 2014: Expected vote in the Council
- 1 January 2016: Regulation envisioned to enter into force
- 1 January 2017: Member States envisioned to submit inspection plans
- 31 December 2020: Commission to review the legislation

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTS LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION ON THE REDUCTION OF LIGHTWEIGHT PLASTIC BAGS

On 16 April, the European Parliament adopted the draft legislative resolution by MEP Margrete Auken (Greens, DK) on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 94/62/EC on packaging and packaging waste to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags in Europe.

The resolution follows the proposal from the Commission presented last year aiming to amend the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) by requiring Member States to adopt measures to reduce the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags in their territory (with a wall thickness below 50 microns).

The report adopted by the Parliament amends the Commission’s proposal inter alia by introducing an EU wide reduction target. It stipulates that “Member States shall take measures to achieve a sustained reduction in the consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags on their territory of at least 50% by 2017 and 80% by 2019, as compare to the average consumption in the Union in 2010, respectively.” The measures at their disposal should include economic instruments as well as marketing restrictions in derogation of article 18 of the PPWD.

The Council is currently in the process of establishing its position on the matter, in view of proceeding with formal inter-institutional discussions.

See here for EXPRA’s position paper on the plastic bags proposal and here for the text adopted in plenary.
EU PUBLISHES DRAFT LIST OF ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT PILOTS

The Commission has recently published its second wave selection of pilots for Product Environmental Footprint (EPF) and Organisation Environmental Footprint (OEF) for the food, feed and beverage sector. Whereas it decided not to select a pilot from the two OEF proposals, it selected 11 PEF pilots. The draft list of pilots covers the following fields:

- Beer
- Coffee
- Dairy
- Feed
- Fish
- Meat
- Pasta
- Packed water
- Pet food
- Olive oil
- Wine

Stakeholders can get involved in the projects following the publication of the selected pilots in June 2014. The final selection will be presented at the PEF Food Conference in Berlin on 6-7 May.

Please find more information here.

On a related theme, various organisations, including FoodDrinkEurope and WWF, have cosigned a set of policy recommendations for a more sustainable food chain. Among other things, they would like to see an international alignment of the EU product footprint methodology. They would also inter alia like to see additional efforts to reduce food waste.

The full declaration can be found here.

EBB REPORT ON EU WASTE POLICY AND RESOURCE EFFICIENCY

In the context of the ongoing EU Waste Target Review and previous Resource Efficiency Roadmap, the European Environment Bureau (EEB) has published a study called ‘Advancing Resource Efficiency in Europe - Indicators and waste policy scenarios to deliver a resource efficient and sustainable Europe’. The report focuses on EU resource efficiency and waste policy and includes scenarios for various combinations of policy measures.

In addition to pointing towards the job potential and CO2 reductions in case of an ambitious EU waste policy, the EEB also supports the adoption at EU level of resource efficiency indicators in fields such as material use, land, water and carbon. Moreover, it calls on the Commission to reduce disposal and energy recovery options for biodegradable waste, as well as to set targets according to options within the waste hierarchy.

The report suggests various options for Member States to reach their targets, such as tax incentives for recycled or reused products, taxing disposed products, charging schemes for households, as well as reinforced EPR. It suggests combining the options in order to reach the best results in terms of complying with the waste hierarchy.

In order to further develop EPR, the EEB argues that minimum standard rules are needed at EU level. Member States should then be allowed to go beyond the common rules, on the basis of their own specific needs. It further remarks that best practices and detailed guidance should be available to Member States to support this development.

See here for the report.
POTOČNIK GIVES OPENING SPEECH AT THE 16TH EUROPEAN FORUM ON ECO-INNOVATION ON “WASTED POTENTIAL”

Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for Environment, gave the opening speech at the 16th European Forum on Eco-Innovation in Hannover titled “Wasted Potential”.

The Commissioner stated that resource efficiency has been at the heart of the Europe 2020 strategy. He praised Germany on its consideration of resource efficiency, recalling that the country has had a target for the past ten years.

As regards measures at EU level, he reiterated that “in a few weeks I will present revised targets for recycling waste and for reducing landfill” stressing that this will stimulate the move to a circular economy.

Whereas the Commissioner pointed out that Member States and the private sector will have to drive this transition towards a more circular economy, he stated that the Commission is working on adjusting the framework conditions to speed-up it up. According to the Commissioner, the upcoming Communication on Circular Economy and the review of waste legislation will emphasise the need for a system change, facilitated by eco-innovation.

See here for the full text of the speech.

News from EXPRA members

CONAI

THE RECYCLING CHAIN IS IMPORTANT TO THE ECONOMY AND COMPETITIVENESS

The CONAI system continues to make an important contribution to the environment, as for example shown by the recovery and recycling figures for 2013.

According to preliminary 2013 data, the packaging placed on the market for consumption is in line with the figure recorded the year before, reaching 11.4 million tonnes. The total recovery of packaging made from steel, aluminum, paper, wood, plastic and glass grew over the previous year with an increase of 1.3 %, amounting to 76.7% of the total packaging placed for consumption. This is equivalent to 8.74 million tonnes of packaging recovered.

The overall recycling reached 66.5% of the total packaging placed for consumption, a slight increase from the previous year. The management of packaging waste with ANCI- CONAI conventions grew significantly (+3.3 % compared to 2012), for a total of 3.37 million tons. There are over 7,000 municipalities served by the conventions, with the involvement of over 57 million citizens, 90% of the population.

In Italy, the economic returns generated from the recycling of packaging are equal to10 billion Euros per year, half of which attributable to the management consortium.
The separate collection system continues to expand in Romania

In 2013, Eco-Rom Ambalaje recycled 347.089 tons of packaging waste, successfully fulfilling the compulsory 55% recycling objective. The total quantity of 578.771 tons of packaging was placed on the market by the producers and importers, members of the organisation.

The number of localities that benefit from the separate collection of packaging waste service has increased by 15%, reaching 464 locations. Currently, approximately 45% of the population - around 9 million Romanians - has access to the service provided by Eco-Rom Ambalaje in partnership with the local authorities and the designated sanitation operators.

Approximately 40.000 tons of household packaging waste was recycled trough the separate collection service supported by the system, 9% more than in 2012. However, as regards the total quantity of packaging waste recycled (347.089 tons) the level of growth in 2013 only grew moderately (2%) compared to the previous year. On the other hand the industry investments in the separate collection services increased by 20% (approximately 2 million euro). The main causes not obtaining a higher growth in recycling were waste theft (and selling the packaging waste to recycle centers) and the damages related of the separate collection bins by homeless people.

Following the new Sanitation Law, there is thorough debate in Romania on these matters. The law is now debated in the Parliament, in view of amending its form and content. Eco-Rom Ambalaje participates actively in many of the ongoing debates, promoting a transparent and efficient system.

Internal reorganisations

Two years ago, ECOEMBES took on the challenge of becoming a more representative organisation when it comes to “Good Corporative Governance”.

The objective of this project has been to improve the organisation’s performance when it comes to information transparency, internal control culture, the composition and performance of the governing bodies and administration, the protection of the shareholders’ rights and the relation to different stakeholders.

ECOEMBES has modified the structure of its governing bodies in order to intensify the protection of shareholders’ rights, to ensure the equal treatment between all of them and to improve the management of stakeholders conflicts.

In this regard, ECOEMBES has reduced its Board of Directors to 15 members and one CEO, improving the efficiency of this board and marking off clearly its functions and responsibilities.

Also, the internal control works related to the process have been improved due to the financial information and the criminal liability, adopting the best market doings.

ECOEMBES’ shareholders have worked hard to even further improve transparency and efficiency in management, with a view to become a model to follow in Corporate Governance.
A PRIME EXAMPLE OF SHOPPING BAG REDUCTION: A SUCCESS AT 0.03 EUROS

Due to the Voluntary Code of Best Practices for the Use of Shopping Bags, developed in 2008 by Éco Entreprises Québec (EEQ) in collaboration with the government and four associations of retailers and distributors, Quebec exceeded — in 2010 — the government’s 50% shopping bag reduction target two years ahead of schedule!

One study showed that, between 2007 and 2010, Quebecers had reduced their use of shopping bags by 52%. In other words, Quebecers consumed 1 billion fewer shopping bags. Retailers of consumer goods, particularly the food and drug store sectors, actually saw a 60% reduction.

The Voluntary Code defines 20 concrete measures to reduce the amount of shopping bags, typically made of paper or plastic, distributed and discarded every year in Quebec. A simple yet effective example: ask consumers for 0.03 euros per shopping bag to encourage them to use reusable bags. The measures also aim to promote the use of reusable bags and other durable containers, foster the reuse, recovery and recycling of shopping bags and educate store staff and customers about the issue.

In addition, a number of retailers donate the proceeds from each sale to local charities!

See here for more information.

GREENPAK WELCOMES TWO LARGE LOCAL COUNCILS TO ITS WASTE RECOVERY SCHEME

Two of the largest Local Councils in Malta have recently terminated their contracts with GreenPak’s competitors and transferred their waste collection and recycling services to GreenPak, Malta’s leading national scheme. These additional localities bring the total number of local councils served by GreenPak to 38, covering more than 64% of the Maltese population.

The separated materials collected from these localities is sent for recycling, in a renewed push towards increasing the recovery of packaging materials in a more sustainable way. GreenPak has always endeavored to instil awareness within the communities to recycle more plastic, metal, glass and paper through the wide range of services it offers, from recycling bags, curbside collections, bring-in sites and specific material collections such as glass.

Ing. Mario Schembri, GreenPak Coop CEO, said: “The addition of two of Malta’s largest localities offers great challenges but also great opportunities – to reach a higher number of residents and continue lending a hand in increasing recycling levels. The repeated migration of local councils we have witnessed during these last months is testimony to our superior service, and the quality with which we deliver. Through our ongoing commitment, we have become the leading waste collection and recycling services provider in Malta and Gozo. This serves to strengthen our resolve to provide these communities with better recycling programmes and solutions.”

The collection frequency runs throughout the week. In localities with high commercial activity, GreenPak also provides collections from shops and small businesses including Saturdays. GreenPak runs a ‘free recycling bag’ programme which is distributed to each household in an effort to encourage ‘Recycling on Tuesdays’.
Photocaption: Ing Mario Schembri presenting the GreenPak certificate to the Mayor Rosanne Cutajar and Mr Kenneth Brincat, Executive Secretary of Qormi Local Council.