

PRESS RELEASE

EXPRA Member Ecoembes launches first Circular Economy innovation, research and testing centre in Europe: TheCircularLab

Brussels, June 2017. ECOEMBALAJES ESPAÑA, S.A. (Ecoembes), one of the two EXPRA Spanish members, a non-profit environmental organisation that promotes a circular economy through household packaging recycling, has recently launched TheCircularLab. This is a pioneering project in Europe that, through joint collaborative research within the circular economy framework, seeks to study, conceive, test and apply best practices in the field of packaging and recycling.

Based in Logroño, Spanish region of Rioja, TheCircularLab aims to become an international reference in circular economy matters. Its goal is to turn the region into a large real-scale experimentation centre, in close cooperation with companies, the public administration and citizens. It also expects to develop circular economy patterns that are transferable to other areas in Spain, Europe and worldwide.

More specifically, the project will tap into four research areas:

- Boosting ecodesign and developing the packaging for the future;
- Developing tools to facilitate waste separation in the home and adequate recycling, including digital ones (Recycling Siri);
- Applying cutting-edge technology to packaging collection, selection and recycling processes;
- Encouraging open and collaborative innovation by networking with new entrepreneurs and start-ups involved in the circular economy.

Through the project, Ecoembes will create at the initial stage, 40 new jobs in situ and over 200 additional ones through open innovation programmes and the integration of companies and various entrepreneurship ecosystems.

EXPRA's Managing Director, Joachim Quoden, commented: *"We are proud of Ecoembes' innovative approach - it is rather unique in Europe. It is looking to the future, but at the same staying very practical. Over the years, Ecoembes has showcased the absolute relevance of industry-driven EPR applied from a public service perspective, and been an innovation frontrunner. Europe will benefit from this pioneering project".*

Óscar Martín, CEO of Ecoembes, stated: *"TheCircularLab represents one further step towards consolidating a sustainable development model, based on a circular economy and collaborative innovation. This is a goal that Ecoembes has been striving to reach since we began our activity, 20 years ago, and which clearly is bringing us gradually closer to consolidating a form of citizenship that is becoming more involved in recycling matters".*

About EXPRA

EXPRA is the *Extended Producer Responsibility Alliance – the organisation for packaging and packaging waste recovery and recycling systems which are owned by the obliged industry and work on a not-for-profit or profit not for distribution basis*. EXPRA acts as the authoritative voice and common policy platform representing the interests of its members, which are all founded and run by or on behalf of the obliged industry. Over the past 20 years, our 25 members across 23 countries, including 17 EU Member States, have co-organised the collection, sorting and recycling of used packaging (with a focus on household packaging) on behalf of the obliged industry. In so doing, they fulfil their legal take-back and recycling obligations, serving over 200 million inhabitants and recycling over 18 million tons of packaging per year. For more information, please visit www.expra.eu.

About Ecoembes

Ecoembes (www.ecoembes.com) is a non-profit entity in charge of managing the recovery and recycling of plastic packaging, tins and cartons (yellow container), and cardboard and paper containers (blue container) all over Spain. In 2016, more than 1.3 million tons were recycled of light and cardboard and paper containers throughout Spain, reaching a 76% recycling rate. Thanks to this percentage, many environmental benefits were obtained, such as avoiding the emission of 1 million tons of CO₂ into the air or saving **7 million MWh**, i.e. equivalent to the annual electricity consumption of more than **700,000 Spanish households**. Furthermore, **20.1 million cubic metres of water** were saved.
