

Press release

Brussels, December 15th, 2017

Fost Plus extends and simplifies selective sorting. From 2019 onwards, all plastic packaging can be put in the blue bag.

This new system both simplifies sorting for the general public and represents a major step forward towards a recycling solution for all packaging put on the market.

- **Fost Plus extends and simplifies selective sorting of plastic packaging for the general public :**
- **A single blue bag, collected from homes, for all plastic packaging, metal packaging and drinks cartons.**
- **The aim is to gradually extend the new system throughout Belgium over a two-year period between 1 January 2019 and 2021.**
- **This development will make it possible to collect an additional 8 kg/year/inhabitant which, according to Fost Plus, should be processed in a limited number of state-of-the-art sorting centres enabling sustainable and high-value recycling.**
- **Belgium will therefore be able to achieve a recycling rate of 64%, well above the European recommendations (currently 22.5%, with 45-55% expected from 2025).**
- **By means of this development, Fost Plus intends to promote the circular economy and ultimately aims to offer a recycling solution for all packaging put on the market.**

A new boost for the circular economy

Belgium currently has the highest recycling rate for household packaging in Europe – something to be proud of – thanks to the collection system for glass (via bottle banks), paper/cardboard and PMD set up by Fost Plus and its members, companies putting packaging products on the market, partners and, above all, the general public.

However, guided by a long-term vision, Fost Plus and its members want to go even further to promote the circular economy. This is why they have decided to take this new step in optimizing the selective collection, sorting and recycling of household packaging waste.

Simplified sorting rules

Since Fost Plus introduced selective sorting of household packaging waste in Belgium, only plastic bottles and containers have been accepted in 'blue' bags, along with metal packaging and drinks

cartons. From 2019 onwards, sorting will be easier for the general public: all types of plastic packaging will be accepted in the blue bags, including yoghurt pots, food trays and plastic film.

As regards the bag, Fost Plus is keeping the blue colour, which is a fixture in the daily lives of households, since the 'blue bag' is now part of everyday vocabulary. Similarly, the term PMD will still be used.

This widening of selective sorting will please members of the public who are increasingly concerned about environmental protection. The simplification of the system, which makes sorting even easier, will lead to an increase in the volume of packaging that is recycled and hence save resources.

Introduction phased in over two years

The process of deploying the 'new' blue bag, which is scheduled to start on 1 January 2019 for 1.5 million inhabitants, will involve three successive waves spread over two years. From 1 January 2021, the extended blue bag will be accessible to all Belgian households. This gradual implementation gives all parties involved – municipalities, intermunicipal agencies, sorting centres and recyclers – time to make the necessary adjustments and develop new sorting and recycling units.

Good for society and for the environment

In addition to increasing support among the Belgians, this development will have a series of positive environmental and social effects:

- 8 kg of additional plastic packaging sorted per consumer per year (i.e. 8 kg less household waste to be placed in the 'general' waste bags)
- 70,000 tonnes of additional recycled plastic packaging per year
- An eventual plastic recycling rate of 64%, compared with 39% at present, which is well above the targets set by Europe (22.5% at the moment and 55% as of 2025)
- More than 100,000 tonnes of CO2 saved per year
- EUR 18 million in savings for local authorities thanks to the reduction in the volume of household waste to be incinerated
- 350 new jobs, mainly for low-skilled workers, created in collection, sorting and recycling activities.

A collective responsibility

In order to give the new collection and recycling system every chance of success, the collaboration of all the players in the sector is necessary, from packaging managers to sorting centres. In fact, in the implementation plan sent to the CIE/IVC, the interregional packaging commission, on 15 December, packaging managers undertake to cover the additional costs, estimated at EUR 37 million per year, through Fost Plus, enabling the operators concerned to adapt the collection, sorting and recycling activities to meet the requirements of the new model. For its part, Fost Plus expects its partners to make efforts to modernise and reduce the number of sorting centres that will have to deal with larger volumes and new categories of PMD plastic packaging. The public

authorities will also have to create optimal conditions for attracting new investment in the local recycling sector.

Belgium will strengthen its position as European leader

William Vermeir, managing director of Fost Plus explains: *"This project will enable Belgium to strengthen its leadership position in the recycling of household packaging waste. Together with our members, we eventually want to find recycling solutions for all household packaging placed on the market. The plan for the extended collection of plastic packaging is a very important step in this process and the fulfilment of this commitment. The progress made in recycling and the new sorting system will take us a long way along to road towards the circular economy."*

Fevia President Jean Eylenbosch testifies to the willingness of food companies: *"They want to include all their packaging in the circular economy. In this context, this announcement is a fundamental step for Fevia, the federation of the food industry. There will be a cost, even a significant cost, but food companies are ready to invest in solutions that bring real environmental added value. In this and other areas, they are fulfilling their social responsibility perfectly."*

Dominique Michel, CEO of Comeos: *"This is an evolution for the customer, but a revolution for the sector. At the time, the retail sector was already at the forefront of the industry when it came to eliminating plastic bags at the checkout. We saved 4,560 tonnes of plastic, twice as much as the Atomium. Today, we are delighted with this new breakthrough."*

Françoise Van Tiggelen, General Secretary of DETIC stresses that *"the evolution of the sorting system creates greater harmony between the needs of the consumer, whose task will be simplified, and the needs of businesses which will have more possibilities and diversity for recycling. So it is an excellent initiative to encourage the deployment of a circular economy."*

About Fost Plus

The non-profit organisation Fost Plus is responsible for promoting, coordinating and financing the selective collection, sorting and recycling of household packaging waste in Belgium. Thanks to the efficient collection of glass, cardboard paper and PMC, we recycle approximately 680,000 tonnes of packaging per year, or 87.4% of the household packaging placed on the market by our members.

Packaging management has therefore evolved decisively towards the sustainable management of materials. To achieve this, we work closely with all parties involved: municipalities, intermunicipal agencies, collection companies, sorting centers, recyclers and the general public. Our activities are financed by companies that place packaging on the Belgian market. www.fostplus.be

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