

Single-use plastics: Alleged strategic cornerstone leaves important doubts

EUROCHAMBRES very much welcome yesterdays' push by the European Commission to tackle the issue of single-use plastics. However, EUROCHAMBRES considers that the proposal falls short of the strategic outlook mapped out in the Plastics Strategy presented in January.

First of all, the definition of single-use plastics remains flawed at best. Secondly, an outright ban of any product must always be met with caution and should only be considered as ultimate measure. Europe is the source of less than 2% of global marine litter, prohibiting some of the plastic products in the EU would arguably not be expedient to solve this problem. Finally, EUROCHAMBRES are also highly sceptical of additional costs for SMEs in the form of intensified extended producer responsibility, especially when it comes to bearing the costs of clean-ups.

Arnaldo Abruzzini, CEO of EUROCHAMBRES, stated: *"Companies must not be held responsible for actions entirely outside their control. Consumer behaviour is key to reducing improper use and disposal of plastic materials. European Chambers stand ready to support public awareness raising campaigns about the negative effect of certain materials on the marine environment"*.

"Circular Economy can be a boost to innovative solutions made in Europe. Environmental protection must not be at the detriment of competitiveness and value creation. European businesses will meet this challenge head on, as they have always done", he added.

European plastics' sector and SMEs

Around 60'000 companies –most of them SMEs– form the European plastics sector, which employs over 1,5 million people across the continent.

In 2016 they generated a turnover close to 350 billion Euro, producing essential and highly sensitive goods ranging from food, beverages and pharmaceutical packaging to automobile parts and construction materials. Plastics are considered the best available material for many of these applications due to hygiene, safety and ecological considerations. The sector greatly contributes to the value added in Europe and works incessantly to improve its resource efficiency.

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