PREPARING THE FUTURE OF PLASTICS RECOVERY

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Over the years, PlasticsEurope has been and is involved in a number of projects related to feedstock recycling, energy recovery and mechanical recycling.

PlasticsEurope recently launched an Industry Action on Resource Efficiency to generate new projects and steer implementation of current ones in the fields of resource efficient waste recovery and litter prevention as well as advocating zero landfill and promoting best practices in waste management. PlasticsEurope wants to ascertain that eco-efficient plastics waste management best practices are implemented on a regional level, securing a mix of recycling and energy recovery instead of a strict waste management hierarchy, and that feedstock recycling and advanced energy recovery infrastructures are maximised.

Other projects related to mechanical recycling in which PlasticsEurope has been involved include the WRAP project in the UK, which focuses on mixed plastics recycling, and more specifically, the re-processing of collected mixed plastics. WRAP, an official body created by the UK authorities, believes that mixed plastics should be re-processed rather than incinerated to produce energy and PlasticsEurope role in the debate has been to provide them with EU experience in the field and incorporating experience from other countries.

PlasticsEurope has also been involved in an “EU knowledge transfer” project which was put in place to support the “divert from landfill” concept and aims at improving plastics waste management through an EU-wide dissemination of information and expertise and regional action. PlasticsEurope members have been actively involved in promoting both energy recovery and recycling waste management options in both the UK and Poland.

The industry is also contributing to an inventory of pyrolysis technologies, as well as a project on the identification and recovery of plastic waste in five key EU countries, together with Tecpol. PlasticsEurope has also been involved in two projects related to solid recovered fuel (SRF), namely the NOVOX project which is an assessment of environmental permit regulations for establishing whether operators can include SRF in such a permit (environmental permitting for biomass/SRF synergy power plant), the TAMARA Project which analyses the synergies between biomass woodfire and SRF, and a large scale demonstration test at SEVO (Finland) to evaluate the technical and environmental implications of co-firing SRF in a biomass power plant.

In addition to these projects related to plastics in general, it is worthwhile mentioning the efforts of Vinyl 2010, the organisation set up by the European PVC industry, in the fields of mechanical and feedstock recycling. Mechanical recycling of PVC waste has been actively supported by a dedicated organisation called Recovinyl, which was instrumental in boosting collection of PVC waste by almost 200 kt/year. Investigations about PVC feedstock recycling have been going on for ten years; this considerable body of knowledge will help extending the range of PVC waste which can be effectively recycled.