The plastics industry is very important to the European economy, and increasing its sustainability can bring new opportunities for innovation, competitiveness and job creation. But the way plastics are currently produced, used and discarded fails to capture the economic benefits of a more ‘circular’ approach and harms the environment. The Commission is taking action to modernise the plastics economy in Europe.

A STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE EUROPEAN PLASTICS INDUSTRY

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THE EUROPEAN PLASTICS INDUSTRY

Almost 1.5 million people employed

Annual turnover of €350 billion

18% of global plastic production each year

Action SMEs said they have taken towards better resource efficiency:

- Minimising waste: 65% decrease and 63% increase
- Saving energy

41% of SMEs consider that resource efficiency actions decreased production costs.

Source: Eurobarometer, 2018
IMPROVING PRODUCT DESIGN

It all starts with design. About 80% of all environmental impacts are determined in this phase. Design has a direct impact on the recyclability of plastics and affects the possibility for products and waste materials to find their way back to the market.

With the Plastics Strategy, the Commission aims to encourage and support product design choices which take into account the entire life cycle of plastics and plastic products, making them more durable, reusable and easily recyclable.

As packaging is one of the main uses of plastics, by 2030 all plastic packaging should be recyclable.

USING MORE RECYCLED MATERIALS

The quality of recycled plastics is increasing. But the overall uptake of recycled plastics remains low.

To boost the use of recycled plastics, the Commission is launching a pledging exercise for EU industries. The target is to ensure that by 2025, 10 million tonnes of recycled plastics find their way into new products on the EU market.

ACTION BY THE COMMISSION

- Support design and production of recyclable plastics and products;
- Invest in collection, sorting and recycling infrastructure;
- Improve the traceability of materials and substances to boost recycling rates and ensure clean, safe material cycles;
- Develop quality standards for sorted plastic waste and recycled plastics;
- Develop Green Public Procurement criteria on integrating recycled content;
- Financially support research and development of innovative projects to help businesses in their efforts to increase recycling.