Plastics – the Facts is an analysis of the data related to the production, demand and waste management of plastics materials. It provides the latest business information on production and demand, trade, recovery as well as employment and turnover in the plastics industry. In short, this report gives an insight into the industry's contribution to European economic growth and prosperity throughout the life cycle of the material.

The data presented in this report was collected by PlasticsEurope (the Association of Plastics Manufacturers in Europe) and EPRO (the European Association of Plastics Recycling and Recovery Organisations). PlasticsEurope's Market Research and Statistics Group (PEMRG) provided input on the production of and demand for plastics raw materials. Consultic Marketing & Industrieberatung GmbH helped assess waste generation and recovery data. Official statistics from European or national authorities and waste management organisations have been used for recovery and trade data, where available. Research or expertise from consultants completed gaps.

Figures cannot always be directly compared with those of previous years due to changes in estimates. Some estimates from previous years have been revised in order to track progress, e.g. for use and recovery of plastics across Europe over the past decade.

All figures and graphs in this report show data for EU-27 plus Norway and Switzerland, which is referred to as Europe for the purposes of abbreviation – other country groups are explicitly listed.
Plastics – the material for the 21st century
For the last 150 years, plastics materials have been key enablers for innovation and have contributed to the development and progress of society.

Discover how plastics have changed the world.

www.plasticseurope.org
Key figures of the European plastics industry

The European plastics industry includes plastics raw material producers, plastics converters and plastics machinery manufacturers in the EU27 member States.

**Jobs**
The plastics industry gives direct employment to over **1.45** million people in Europe.

**Companies**
An industry in which more than **60,000** companies operate, most of them SME’s.

**Turnover**
The European plastics industry had a turnover of **320** billion euro in 2013.

**Multiplier effect**
The European plastics industry has a multiplier effect of 2.4 in GDP and almost 3 in jobs.*

**Innovation**
The plastics sector is part of the **top 5** most innovative sector in the EU representing 1 in 25 patents submitted by the industry between 2003 and 2012.

**Recycling**
More than **6.6** million tonnes of plastics waste recycled in 2012.

* 2013, The European House Ambrosetti study, data for Italy, 2013
Plastics: jobs, growth and competitiveness
The European plastics industry: a pillar of economics and society

An industry generating about 26.3 billion euro for public finance and welfare.

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**Plastics manufacturers**

134.000 employees

**Plastics converters**

1.267.000 employees

Number of employees in 2013

**Contribution to EU society**

Tax and social security costs

Corporate tax

~ 26.3 bn €

An industry generating about 26.3 billion euro for public finance and welfare.

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Source: 1. Eurostat.
Plastics are a source of jobs, growth, innovation and sustainability

The growth of the plastics industry has a multiplier effect on numerous important sectors of the European economy. The plastics industry is a key enabler of innovation of many products and technologies in other sectors of the economy like healthcare, energy generation, aerospace, automotive, maritime, construction, electronics, packaging or textile.

None of these sector would innovate and grow as much as they do without plastic materials and solutions. Innovation and growth in Europe depend on manufacturing, in particular the plastics industry. A study led in 2013 by leading Italian think tank “The European House Ambrosetti” reveals the “multiplier effect” of the plastics industry:

- It is in one of the sectors that provides the greatest contribution to EU manufacturing
- A 10% increase in the value added of the European plastics sector could lead to a 4.4% increase in the value added to the overall EU manufacturing sector.

And at national level for Italy:
- For every job created in the plastics sector, almost 3 jobs are created in the wider economy
- A 100€ increase in GDP in the national plastics supply chain generates 238€ of GDP in the national economy

Moreover, the unique characteristics of plastics also allow them to make a strong contribution to a more environmentally sustainable and resource efficient Europe. Lightweight, versatile and durable plastics contribute to energy and resource savings in strategic sectors like retail, construction, healthcare, automotive or renewable energies. In addition, significant advances are also being made in the environmental performance of plastics in their production and end-of-life phases, hence contributing to the sustainability of European industries and societies.
Global competitiveness challenges of the European plastics industry

Low energy costs due to non-conventional fuels. The rate of shale gas in the US energy production is expected to grow from current 10% to 36% by 2035.

One-third of the bio-plastics are produced in Latin America. Access to bio based feedstock provides opportunities for the Brazilian bio-plastics industry.

67% of the world’s oil reserves and 45% of the world gas reserves are located in the Middle East. Feedstock provides opportunities for the plastics industry there. Forward integration of plastics processing industry is on-going.

China is the world leader in plastics production and conversion. Low production costs in plastics’ conversion have triggered investments in the plastics industry, including the plastics machinery manufacturing.

Strong growth in plastics conversion sector (more than 22,000 companies and 4 million employees). Key drivers are the growing population and the growth of manufacturing sectors such as the automotive sector.

Source: based on The European House Ambrosetti study, 2013
Plastics market data
Plastics production grows globally and is stable in Europe

With continuous growth for more than 50 years, global production in 2013 rose to 299 million tonnes, meaning a 3.9% increase compared to 2012. In Europe, the plastic production stabilised in 2013 after the 2009 turn-down. Actual levels are similar to those in 2002.

World and European plastics production 2002-2013
Includes Plastics materials (thermoplastics and polyurethanes), other plastics (thermosets, adhesives, coatings and sealants) and PP-fibers.

Source: PlasticsEurope (PEMRG) / Consultic
Europe ranks second in the global plastics materials production

2013 World production of plastics materials (thermoplastics and polyurethanes)
Does not include other plastics (thermosets, adhesives, coatings and sealants) nor PP-fibers.
Source: PlasticsEurope (PEMRG) / Consultic
A positive trade balance of 18 billion euros

EU-27 plastics industry: trade balance with non-EU member countries (Extra-EU)

Source: Eurostat

2013 top trade partners

Source: Eurostat
Two thirds of plastics demand in Europe is concentrated in five countries:

- Germany
- Italy
- France
- Spain
- Poland

Other significant countries include:

- Austria
- Estonia
- Switzerland
- Netherlands
- Czech Republic
- Belgium & Lux.
- United Kingdom
- Sweden
- Portugal
- Denmark
- Slovakia
- Bulgaria
- Ireland
- Norway
- Slovenia
- Lithuania
- Latvia
- Norway
- Cyprus / Malta

European plastics demand by country (Mtonne/year)

Source: PlasticsEurope (PEMRG) / Consultic / ECEBD
Plastics provide for a wide variety of markets

In Europe, packaging applications are the largest application sector for the plastics industry and represent 39.6% of the total plastics demand.

Building and construction is the second largest application sector with 20.3% of the total European demand.

Automotive is the third sector with a share of 8.5% of the total demand.

Electrical and electronic applications represent 5.6% of the plastics demand and are closely followed by agricultural applications which have a share of 4.3%.

Other application sectors such as appliances, household and consumer products, furniture and medical products comprise a total of 21.7% of the European plastics demand.

European plastics demand* by segment 2013
Source: PlasticsEurope (PEMRG) / Consultic / ECEBD
* EU-27+NO/CH
European plastics demand* by polymer type 2013
Source: PlasticsEurope (PEMRG) / Consultic / ECEBD
* EU-27+NO/CH
European plastics demand increased by 1% in 2013

European plastics demand* by polymer type

Source: PlasticsEurope (PEMRG) / Consultic / ECEBD

* EU-27+NO/CH

European plastics demand
46.3 Mtonne

Mtonne

2013  2012  2011
Packaging, building & construction and automotive are the top three markets for plastics

European plastics demand* by segment and polymer type 2013

Source: PlasticsEurope (PEMRG) / Consultic / ECEBD
* EU-27+NO/CH
Waste management data
In 2012 plastics recycling and energy recovery reached 62%

In 2012, 25.2 million tonnes of post-consumer plastics waste ended up in the waste upstream. 62% was recovered through recycling and energy recovery processes while 38% still went to landfill.

Treatment for post-consumer plastics waste in the EU27+Norway and Switzerland

Source: Consultic
Since 2006 recycling and energy recovery have increased...

The annual average of post-consumer plastics waste generation from 2006 to 2012 is 25 Mtonne.

Total plastics waste recycling and recovery 2006 – 2012

Source: Consultic
... but landfilling is still the 1st option in many EU countries

Plastics waste going to landfill (2012)

- Above 66%
- >50% to 66%
- 33% to 50%
- below 10%
  i.e. landfill ban

Source: Consultic
Zero plastics to landfill, a challenging but worthwhile goal

Plastics waste going to landfill in Europe

- Decrease from 2005-2012 (-26%)
- Trend-line (extrapolation)
- Zero plastics to landfill by 2025 scenario

= 60 million tonnes of plastics prevented from landfill, equivalent to over 750 million barrels of oil or 60 billion euros
In general, countries with landfill ban achieve higher recycling rates.

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Treatment of post-consumer plastics waste 2012 (EU-27 + CH/NO)
Source: Consultic
Plastics waste is a resource

Plastics are sorted and crushed into “flakes”, washed, dried and sorted again... ...processed into granulates

...out of which new plastic products are made

The energy value of plastics is used to produce electricity, heating and cooling for millions of homes

Alternatively plastics are used as fuel for industrial processes, replacing fossil fuel

Emissions are subject to strict regulations and control standards

Those plastics which cannot be sustainably recycled can be used in efficient Waste-to-Energy facilities to produce electricity and heat

Recycling is the preferred option

Energy recovery is needed to end the landfilling of plastics

9.6 million tonnes of plastics waste are landfilled every year in Europe

16-19 million more citizens potentially supplied with energy recovered from plastics waste

41% of plastics packaging was recycled in Germany in 2013 (based on input)
Plastics recycling and energy recovery complement each other

Changes in recycling and energy recovery rates by country

Source: Consultic
* For Bulgaria & Romania: comparison 2012 vs. 2007
Plastics packaging has the highest recycling and energy recovery rates

Packaging recycling and energy recovery rate by country 2012
(Referred to post-consumer plastics waste)
Source: Consultic
Crude oil components are separated through distillation. Plastic's major raw material is called naphtha.

Smaller molecules result from naphtha cracking, i.e., ethene, propene and butane.

These short molecules (monomers) are particularly reactive, tie together and form long molecular chains (polymers).

The cross linking of the polymer chains determine their ductility. 
- Thermoplastic (T)
- Duroplast (D)

Plastic pellets are heated into a viscous substance which is blown and stretched into a mould. The mould must be cooled to set the plastic in (a bottle) shape.

PET bottle
Polyethylene Terephthalate is nowadays the major polyester type

Pre-selection of PET bottles

Optoelectronic colour separation

Thermoformed films

Recycled PET is the raw material which is used to produce fleece pullovers

Extruder processes flakes into granules

Automatic colour separation of flakes for further processing

Optoelectronic colour selection

Material separation by density + drying process

Washing

Crushing into so-called flakes

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20% of the recycled material goes into the production of new bottles

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Snapshot and outlook
In 2014 plastics production is still below pre-crisis level

Production index (2010=100, trend cycle & seasonally adjusted data)

Plastics industry production in EU-27
Source: Eurostat
For 2015: plastics production is expected to have a very slight increase

- In 2013: European producer profited from the recovery of the customer industries.
- The positive trend gained momentum in the seconded half of 2014.
- 2015: Moderate upward trend.

Growth rates:
2013: +2.6%
Est* 2014: +1.5%
Est* 2015: 1.0%

Glossary of terms

ABS  Acrylonitrile butadiene styrene
ASA  Acrylonitrile Styrene Acrylate
bn   billion
CH   Switzerland
CIS  Commonwealth of Independent States
Consultic Consultic Marketing & Industrieberatung GmbH
ECEBD Eastern and Central European Business Development
EU   European Union
EPRO European Association of Plastics Recycling and Recovery Organisations
ETP  Engineering Thermoplastics
GDP  Gross domestic product
Mtonne Million tonnes
NAFTA North American Free Trade Agreement
NO   Norway
Other Thermosets, adhesives, coatings and sealants
plastics
PA   Polyamide
PC   Polycarbonate
PE   Polyethylene
PE-HD Polyethylene, high density
PE-LD Polyethylene, low density
PE-LLD Polyethylene, linear low density
PE-MD Polyethylene, medium density
PEMRG PlasticsEurope Market Research Group
PET  Polyethylene terephthalate
Plastics Thermoplastics + Polyurethanes (PUR)
Materials
PUR  Polyurethane
PMMA Polymethyl methacrylate
PP   Polypropylene
PS   Polystyrene
PS-E Polystyrene, expandable
PTFE Polytetrafluoroethylene
PVC  Polyvinyl chloride
SAN  Styrene-acrylonitrile
Thermoplastics Standard plastics (PE, PP, PVC, PS, EPS, PET (bottle grade)) + Engineering plastics (ABS, SAN, PA, PC, PBT, POM, PMMA, Blends, and others including High Performance Polymers)
Thermosets Urea-formaldehyde foam, melamine resine, polyester resins, epoxy resins, etc
UK   United Kingdom
VCI  Verband der Chemischen Industrie e.V.
**PlasticsEurope**

PlasticsEurope is the association of plastics manufacturers and one of the leading European trade associations with centres in Brussels, Frankfurt, London, Madrid, Milan and Paris. It is networking with European and national plastics associations and have more than 100 member companies, producing over 90% of all polymers across the EU28 member states plus Norway, Switzerland and Turkey.

**European Association of Plastics Recycling and Recovery Organisations (EPRO)**

EPRO is the association of national organisations responsible for organising and promoting plastics recycling and recovery in Europe. EPRO provides a unique forum for leading European specialists in plastics waste management to exchange experience and ideas, develop integrated plastics packaging and agriculture waste strategies and support technological development.