

Statement on the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's report "The New Plastics Economy: Catalysing Action"

PlasticsEurope supports the idea of an objective, technology-based strategy and vision for the plastics and packaging industry, guided by circular economy principles. The latest Ellen MacArthur Foundation report "The New Plastics Economy: Catalysing Action" is therefore a welcome tool to stimulate debate and promote innovation towards a more sustainable future of packaging.

While many of the recommendations laid out in the report are thought-provoking, PlasticsEurope is convinced that the report should give further and more careful consideration of the various performance needs which plastics fulfil in the complex packaging sector.

The Ellen MacArthur report advocates for a "fundamental redesign" of plastics packaging. It explains that in order to stimulate reuse and recycling, converging on a few key packaging materials should be explored, and "uncommon" materials such as PVC, PS or multi-material packaging should be replaced. PlasticsEurope does not consider that singling out specific groups of plastics is the right way forward. For solutions to be truly sustainable, a holistic life cycle approach is essential. Multiple and diversified materials are vital to address complex technical and economic packaging needs.

With regard to packaging redesign, the report also suggests avoiding small format plastics packaging where relevant and possible. However, small format packaging was created to reduce food waste. The lifestyle and the demands of our society have been evolving, and food packaging reflects these changes and needs.

All plastic is recyclable, but post-use plastics are recycled at different rates based on economic and environmental considerations. Sorting technology to separate different material streams has made enormous progress in recent years, and therefore recycling rates will further increase. The remaining plastic waste which cannot yet be recycled sustainably can be transformed into energy, thanks to existing energy recovery technologies.

PlasticsEurope looks forward to continuing to collaborate with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and other stakeholders including industry, policy makers and academics to advance recycling, reuse, recovery and remanufacturing of post-use plastics.