

EXPRA Celebrates its 10th Year Anniversary with Conference on Extended Producer Responsibility

Brussels, 28 April – The Extended Producer Responsibility Alliance (EXPRA) celebrated its 10-year anniversary with a conference on 26 April about the history of EXPRA and extended producer responsibility (EPR) over the past decade, while looking forward to the future of EPR systems. The event brought together more than 130 participants, from over 30 countries around the world including Producer Responsibility Organisations (PROs), representatives from European institutions, OECD, NGOs and industry, to discuss the progress made in promoting packaging sustainability over the past decade, as well as the challenges that lie ahead.

Experts discussed the potential of EPR, if implemented correctly, but also acknowledged that there is no silver bullet to improve waste management and that EPR systems have to be adapted to the local situation. The conference emphasized the importance of applying EXPRA's golden rules and taking a holistic view when it comes to promoting circularity and carbon neutrality. Participants agreed that cooperation among actors of the packaging value chain has to increase even more to achieve all the ambitious goals being set by the legislators on waste prevention, reuse and recycling.

The event opened with a keynote speech by the EU Commissioner for Environment, Mr. Virginijus Sinkevičius, who acknowledged EXPRA as an important partner of the Commission and emphasized the crucial role they have played in implementing the EU's policy objectives on circular economy and climate neutrality. He appreciated the best practices recommended by EXPRA and its members noting that they can inspire similar practices for a broadening spectrum of sectors, both in the EU and globally.

Mr. Adly Manseri, the Belgian Counsellor for environment, stated that there is a need for technological neutrality both for the collection of waste as well as for the recycling methods.

The first panel focused on the conception of EU circular economy legislation, and the beginning of EXPRA. The participants discussed the evolution of EU legislation on EPR and the extent to which the EU and EXPRA had delivered on the hopes and ambitions of a decade ago. The panel concluded that relevant lessons can be drawn from the past ten years, namely that cross-cutting principles are needed to make legislation efficient, and that we cannot have a one size fits all approach across all EU Member States. Sharing experiences and knowledge with competitors and non-member PROs is important for continuous improvement and achieving our joint goals and ambitions. More communication is needed with consumers and municipalities to inform them about the value of packaging. These lessons should inform future policy and industry actions as we continue to evolve towards a more sustainable and circular economy.

In the second panel, the current EPR landscape and recent developments in the EU were discussed, pointing out the challenges and opportunities following the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation review. The panel concluded on the need for ambitious yet implementable legislation highlighting that the situation in different Member States has to be taken into account as well as faster implementation of the existing legislation. The discussions included a variety of issues and

topics such as the need to involve municipalities in the collection of waste as well as a way to help build and finance better infrastructure in Europe.

In the panel on EPR globally, experts and representatives from organizations concerned with EPR around the world discussed how EPR can be implemented in further countries around the globe, drawing on best practices and aligning with international initiatives. They found that in order to increase the speed of global alignment with best practices, it is vital to create a common understanding of what EPR is and set minimum standards, as well as working together and sharing data and expertise to help other countries develop efficient EPR systems.

Finally, as the conference turned its focus to the future of EPR, the fourth panel discussed the upcoming challenges and opportunities and how they relate to the steps being taken today. They debated how EPR and organizations like EXPRA need to adapt to ensure an efficient circular economy, taking into account a holistic approach. They concluded that industry and society ought to collaborate and work towards a common goal of creating a sustainable future for generations to come, by implementing EPR measures that are adaptable and effective, taking into consideration the climate impact of the proposed measures to improve waste management.

Following lively discussions, participants left the event with a renewed, even increased commitment to promoting packaging sustainability and to working together to drive innovation and make real progress towards a sustainable future where we don't waste any resource anymore.

About EXPRA

EXPRA is the alliance for 32 packaging and packaging waste recovery and recycling systems which are owned by obliged industry and work on a not-for-profit basis. EXPRA acts as the authoritative voice and common policy platform representing the interests of all its member packaging recovery and recycling organisations founded and run by or on behalf of obliged industry. EXPRA members provide over 220 million inhabitants with packaging collection, sorting and recycling infrastructure and ensure recycling and recovery of over 22 million tons of packaging per year. For additional information, please visit www.expra.eu