

PRESS RELEASE

Plastics recycling in Europe – A waste of your time or a wasted opportunity?

AMI Consulting, Bristol, UK 26/07/18 – According to a recently published study by leading industry consultants Applied Market Information Ltd. (AMI Consulting), the plastics recycling industry will have to develop and grow considerably to meet 2030 EU plastics packaging recycling targets, along with the effect of the Chinese waste import ban.

The study expects that the current output capacity of the recycling industry in Europe will need to more than double by 2030 to meet targets. The challenge in growing capacity, is that the plastics recycling industry is a complex, dynamic segment with a varied supply stream and value chain. With prices of recyclate intrinsically linked to the price of virgin resin, demand and the financial viability of the process is often subject to fluctuations in raw material prices. Due to this, demand for recyclate is increasingly coming down to brand owners desire to be seen as ‘environmentally friendly’ and ‘green’ and not down to financial incentives. This is primarily due to sustainability becoming increasingly more important to consumers, and plastic receiving considerable negative press bringing it to the forefront of many debates and discussions. Capturing the value of plastics through reuse and recycling not only helps retain a product which currently primarily derives from the earth’s finite natural resources, but also helps prevent the leaking of plastic waste into the ecosystem and create a circular economy. Because of this the plastics recycling industry is gaining growing attention.

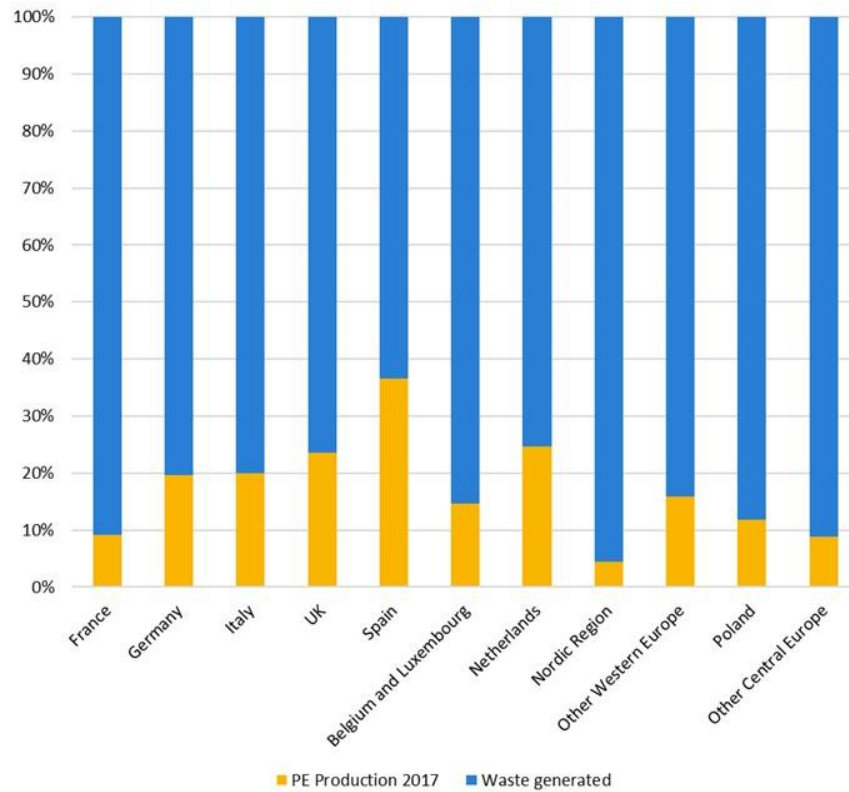
Although polyethylene is currently the most recycled polymer in Europe, PET has the highest capture rate of plastics waste. This is due to the main source of PET waste coming from the post-consumer collection of PET drinks bottles which in many countries are widely collected and have longstanding and robust collection systems in place. Where there is container-deposit legislation implemented, PET drink bottle collection rates reportedly reach as high as 96%, as they encourage consumer participation in the recycling system by giving financial incentives.

Developments in mechanical recycling technology are changing the shape of the plastics recycling industry and increasing the ability to recover more plastics in a closed-loop, helping to retain maximum value. However, currently due to quality and inconsistent supply, large volumes of recyclate are still going to lower value applications. New opportunities are available for those who wish to take advantage of this changing and developing industry.

AMI Consulting’s study, *Plastics Recycling in Europe – capacities, capabilities and future trends* published in June 2018, gives an evaluation of current capacity in Europe and volumes of additional capacity required by 2030 by the following polymers PE, PP, PS, PET and PVC. The report delivers the current industry situation and forecasts where the industry will go in the future. The volume of recyclate consumed by end use application is given with an evaluation of future demand, along with a discussion as to whether the industry can absorb the volumes of recyclate that will have to be produced to meet targets.

Page 1 of 2

Figure 1: PE recycling rates by Country 2017



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‘Plastics Recycling in Europe – Capacities, capabilities and future trends 2018’ is a detailed multi-client research report published in June 2018. For further information please contact Elizabeth Carroll at AMI Consulting Elizabeth.carroll@ami.international