

## **EUROPEN 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary- Welcome remarks**

Hans van Bochove, EUROPEN Chairman

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### *WELCOME*

Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of EUROPEN, the members and the Secretariat, I would like to warmly welcome you all to EUROPEN's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

We are delighted to see so many people from companies and organizations that we work with, including representatives from the European Commission, European Parliament and Member States' Permanent Representations. A special welcome to the Senior Executives of some of our member companies who are with us today for a panel conversation on packaging innovation for a circular economy. And of course, I would also like to warmly welcome our esteemed policy speakers:

- Mr. Karl-Heinz Florenz MEP, he and his office played a very active and constructive role in the development of the legislative texts of the Circular Economy Package.
- Mr. Cosmin Boianiu, the Honourable Deputy-Ambassador of Romania, who will be holding the Council presidency during the first semester of next year, and hence likely to play a key role in the final negotiations on the Single Use Plastics legislative proposal.
- Finally, I would also like to welcome you Mr. Timmermans as the European Commission's 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President. We are very much aware of your driving force behind the Circular Economy and it is a great honor to have you with us today and listen to your views in a minute.

### *EUROPEN's PURPOSE AND HISTORY*

Ladies and gentlemen, your presence at today's event illustrates the constructive role that EUROPEN has played over the last twenty five years and the credibility it has gained in representing all packaging materials and links in the European packaging supply chain in policy related matters around packaging and the environment.

At the time that the first Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive started to be discussed, a group of likeminded companies in our packaging supply-chain realized that there was a responsibility to balance the functionality of packaging with environmental sustainability and a need to advocate for sensible public policy to support that.

In the more than two decades that followed, industry has delivered on that original purpose, working to successfully decouple the use of packaging material and economic growth, while packaging recovery organizations were set up by Producers providing Europe with the leadership position in recycling today.

From a Producers' perspective all packaging materials are equally important and it is in our interest that all materials are environmentally sustainable and perceived as such. Despite the successes of the past, the packaging supply chain is aware that packaging has become an integral part of modern society, causes challenges in certain areas and that more needs to be done to address this.

### *STATUS QUO? : PROUD OF WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED*

EUROPEN therefore welcomed the Commission's Circular Economy Package late 2015, and over the last few years has been working constructively with EU institutions to develop a balanced legislative package that was finally adopted last week by the European Parliament.

We were very happy that the ambitious recycling targets for packaging were matched by retaining the Internal Market as the sole legal base of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive. Like no one else we know that this didn't come easy. What also didn't come easy was a workable definition of Extended Producer Responsibility as the primary

vehicle to deliver future recycling results. The introduction of minimum requirements for EPR schemes is a strong improvement, though unfortunately the list of costs for which Producers are held responsible is still open and ultimately provide an uncertain perspective.

#### *QUO VADIS? : STILL MUCH TO BE DONE*

As packaging supply chain we can never afford to be complacent. I would even dare to say that the easy part is just behind us. From here on, it is about execution under uncertainty, with many new initiatives still in the pipeline. It is like sailing in uncharted waters without a calibrated compass showing North.

While we are awaiting how Member States will transpose the legislative text of the Circular Economy Package in their national legislation, and do or do not adopt any of the many suggested measures in the Plastics Strategy, we are already preparing for:

1. Guidance from the Commission on modulated EPR fees and on separate collection and sorting of waste
2. A myriad of implementing and delegating acts, such as the one on calculation methods including recycling measurements.
3. The ongoing pledging campaign on recycled plastics content and beyond, one of the core elements of the Commission's Plastic Strategy, while at the same time we are awaiting the legislative proposal addressing Single-Use Plastics. So, what should industry say 'yes' to at the moment?
4. The anticipated review of the Essential Requirements of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive, also touching upon product-packaging design.
5. An expected overhaul of the same directive where the Internal Market as the sole legal base once again needs to be protected.

And the list goes on for a while, and then we haven't touched upon ideas for taxation yet.

From all this, it is actually an understatement to say that there is still much to be done, both in clarifying the consistency of the many measures proposed and in operationalizing the policy in a practical way.

#### *A CLEAR FUTURE FOR EUROPEN*

As always, EUROPEN will be a constructive partner again in supporting the drive towards a higher level of environmental protection for all packaging materials. But of course we will also advocate for this to be done in a sensible way. In order to be effective, all measures need to be consistent. And with so many being suggested it is easy to lose track. A competitive level playing field within industry needs to be ensured and the Internal Market needs to be protected. And for efficiency, roles and responsibilities need to be clear in order to avoid having the "E" in EPR changing from "Extended" to "Endless".

From all this, I believe EUROPEN's purpose is as relevant today as it was twenty-five years ago, and so is its determination to continue to be the voice of the European packaging supply chain and play its knowledgeable and constructive role in driving the balance between the functionality of packaging and its environmental sustainability and public perception. I am proud to be EUROPEN's Chairman and to work with all of you towards making a success of the Circular Economy for Packaging.

#### *INTRODUCING Mr. TIMMERMANS*

Ladies and gentlemen, before we move into our panel conversation with Senior Executives of some of our member companies, it is a great privilege for us to welcome three keynote speeches, starting with the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice-President of the European Commission. Mr. Timmermans, your passion and ambition for a Circular Economy is inspiring and we are very much looking forward to hearing from you. The floor is yours.

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