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**Urgent actions required to protect  
the European recycling industry  
from unfair competition linked to  
massive imports of plastics labelled  
as “recycled”**

**EuRIC POSITION PAPER  
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# Urgent actions required to protect the European recycling industry from unfair competition linked to massive imports of plastics labelled as “recycled”

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## EuRIC’s Call to EU Policy-Makers on Plastics Recycling

The European plastics recycling industry is vital for achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal. By turning plastics waste into recyclates, Europe-based plastics recycling industry directly contribute to reducing the carbon footprint of plastics, decreasing Europe’s reliance on oil imports, boosting circularity, and providing traceable and environmentally sound solutions for plastic waste generated in Europe.

Recycled content targets for plastic packaging have been instrumental over the last years in pulling the demand for recycled plastics and support these objectives. They have sent a powerful signal to recycling companies to invest in new plants capable of meeting the domestic demand for high-quality recycled plastics used in packaging.

However, the uncontrolled increase of imports of cheap plastics, both virgin and plastics labelled as recycled, is severely damaging plastics recycling in Europe. These plastics, imported mainly from Asia, are processed under conditions that do not meet EU standards, in countries where there are no pull measures to boost circularity of materials. **Imported plastics do not contribute to EU circularity goals, as they are not produced from EU plastics waste and come from countries that have not implemented similar circularity targets.**

As a result, the prices of recyclates dropped significantly, by up to 50% in 2023, with market signals showing no sign of recovery in 2024. **Consequently, European plastics recycling companies, despite having invested hundreds of millions of euros to meet circularity goals, are now forced to operate well-below their production capacity. This has led to an increase in the implementation of temporary unemployment schemes.**

Urgent action within the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) is crucial:

- **Minimum recycled content targets for plastic packaging put on the market in the EU must be met using post-consumer plastic packaging waste collected within the EU.**

This is entirely in line with the findings of the Impact Assessment of the PPWR according to which plastics’ recycled content aims inter alia at boosting recycling in Europe.

- **A robust traceability system, verified by independent third-party, is needed to ensure that plastics labelled as recycled are actually recycled under equivalent conditions to those set in the EU.**

These measures are essential to level the playing field between European plastics' recyclers and importers of virgin plastics and plastics labelled as recycled. They also guarantee that recycled content designed to reduce EU's dependency on extracted raw materials and boost investments in circular value chains, do not subsidise non-EU operators.

These measures are also imperative to maintain consistency within the overall EU policy framework. According to the freshly agreed Waste Shipment Regulation (WSR), and the upcoming ban on plastic exports to non-OECD countries by 2026, European plastics recyclers will be almost exclusively reliant on treating plastics waste and selling recycled plastics within the European market.

Failure to alleviate the unbalanced pressure on recyclers, risks Europe missing its legally binding and newly proposed recycling and recycled content targets and undermining the potential of green job growth, whilst leading to the loss of industrial jobs and infrastructure, causing them to relocate outside Europe.

As highlighted in the [European Recyclers' Priorities for 2024-2029](#), EuRIC stands for a Green Industrial Deal. It is imperative that our ambitious sustainability targets aren't skewed in favour of primarily non-European producers who don't play by the same rules, be it in terms of circularity, energy, or labour costs. European plastics' recyclers don't want to see jobs and infrastructure vanish because of unfair competition from outside the EU, as other industrial sectors have witnessed in recent years.

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