

EuRIC Statement on the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) for the waste management & recycling industry

EuRIC, the European Recycling Industries' Confederation, calls on the European Union and competent authorities from Member State and from the UK, Norway and Switzerland to acknowledge:

- **The essential role of the waste management and recycling industry** in collecting, sorting and recycling of waste from household and industries to protect human health and the environment and
- **Its strategic importance for the European economy** as a provider of secondary raw materials (SRM) which are critical to downstream industries, some of them directly involved in combatting COVID-19 pandemic.

Hence, EuRIC would like in to raise awareness and call for a few but important measures touching upon:

- **Security of workers and work continuation** in waste management & recycling activities (incl. transport): Waste management and recycling are essential for society and the economy. In the current crisis situation, we ask competent authorities to ensure that workers involved in the collection, transport and treatment of waste, be them from household or commercial & industrial activities, are provided with sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE), in line with national and European safety measures as well as to benefit from any schemes (e.g. childcare) to adequately carry out their activities. More flexible working hours, incl. on Sunday, may also be required in current circumstances for some operators to continue operating.
- **Classification as a strategic sector:** the recycling industry, as a base industry, provides raw materials which are strategic to the functioning of several European downstream industries, stemming from metals, paper, plastics, WEEE, ELV, tyres or textiles' recycling (non-exhaustive raw materials' listing).

The strategic/critical role of the waste management and recycling industry shall be formally acknowledged by Member States, as already the case in some of them. EuRIC calls on the European Commission to draw an EU-wide list of strategic/critical sectors and to include in it the waste management and recycling industry.

EuRIC calls additionally for targeted measures which derogate to rules in normal situations, such as:

- **Logistics & Trade:** EuRIC supports the statement of Business Europe¹ to protect as much as possible the internal market in the current circumstances. Secondary raw materials (SRM) are commodities competing globally. Demand for SRM shall be able to feed European production facilities (smelters, steel and paper mills, plastic converters, etc.) which are still operating, hence the absolute need to protect cross-border movement of SRM, be them classified as waste or products;
- **Storage:** in the most COVID-19 affected EU countries; production facilities are closing (e.g. steel industry in Italy) resulting in a sharp decline of demand. Competent authorities shall be able to grant derogations allowing to increase storage capacity beyond what is normally allowed by European or National rules, in order to mitigate negative effects on the collection and treatment of waste;
- **State aids eligibility:** the European recycling industry is, by nature, job-intensive. It has experienced a turbulent period over the last two years, some streams such as recovered paper, being already in an economic crisis situation prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Europe. A significant share of recycling companies, relying on domestic, European and global demand, are currently facing considerable economic and licensing problems which lead to liquidity bottlenecks that can quickly become an existential threat, in particular for small and medium sized (SMEs) companies.

Hence, the waste management and recycling sector should be eligible for state aids and be included in any legally-compliant list drawn for such purposes, including schemes to support companies in financial difficulty, such as temporary tax exemptions and other measures resulting in financial relief.

¹ [Position paper of Business Europe, 16.03.2020](#): *The internal market must be protected, with the Commission closely monitoring any distortion of the internal market and discouraging the creation of national barriers that do not respect the principle of solidarity and proportionality, as established in the treaties. In particular, transportation of goods within the EU single market, for example by trucks, must not be blocked.*

EuRIC will keep monitoring on a daily basis the impact of COVID-19 on the waste management and recycling industry, across Europe. Any request or information linked to this crisis situation, be it from public authorities or from private operators, can be addressed to euric@euric-aisbl.eu

EuRIC - The European Recycling Industries' Confederation - is the umbrella organisation for recycling industries. Through its Member Federations from 21 EU&EFTA countries, EuRIC represents across Europe over:

- 5,500+ companies generating an aggregated annual turnover of about 95 billion €, including large companies and SMEs, involved in the recycling and trade of various resource streams;
- 300,000 local jobs which cannot be outsourced to third EU countries;
- Million tons of waste recycled per year (metals, paper, glass, plastics, textiles, tyres and beyond);

By turning wastes into resources, recycling is the link which reintroduces recycled materials into the value chains again and again.

Recyclers play a key role in bridging resource efficiency, climate change policy and industrial transition.