

# ■ Recycling Online



The phrase “Think globally, act locally” may have ascended into the cliché pantheon, but its meaning is often still valid when applied to activities like recycling. What

## Keeping an eye on Europe

*by Roger Guttentag*

happens “out there” can affect what happens here in areas such as market pricing, technological developments or policies.

Currently, our industry is focused on what is happening in Asia, particularly due to the heavy demand for industrial raw material by the Chinese economy. However, we should not forget that the world’s largest economic and trade region is the 28 nations that comprise the European Union (EU). While the majority of the EU’s raw material needs for its recycling industries are

derived from a dense network of domestically managed recycling programs, the EU also does import scrap materials and, just as importantly, is a major market for recycling technologies and services. In addition, EU legislative policies, such as those addressing waste disposal reduction and producer responsibilities, have an effect on the evolution of recycling in the U.S.

You can keep track of trends that affect EU demand for recyclable materials, technologies and services by subscrib-

ing to marketing reports on the EU that are regularly published (see examples of them on the research site, Research and Markets), but their costs can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars. For this reason, it may be worthwhile to first look at information sources on the EU that are available on a free or low-cost basis. The following survey summarizes some of these sources.

## European Commission (EC)

The waste section of the EC Environment site is a primary source for information on EU garbage and recycling policy, particularly with regard to specific material streams such as electrical and electronic equipment, motor vehicles and packaging. The EC site also has numerous links to reports and studies that it has sponsored. These resources include discussions of current applications for different materials such as PVC and how markets for these materials are affected by EU policies. The site also gives access to a large collection of statistical data sets (Eurostat) on recycling and waste trends in the EU. Perhaps most notable is a Eurostat article on secondary material pricing movements for the 2000 to 2010 period.

## European Organization for Packaging and Environment (EOPE)

The primary value of the EOPE site for nonmember users is access to publications that provide statistical summaries of recycling rates for different packaging by country and by material, as well as discussions of how the various EU legislative directives affecting packaging are being implemented.

## European Recovered Paper Council (ERPC)

The role of the ERPC is to monitor and report on the progress being made in meeting the paper recycling targets articulated in the European Declaration on Paper Recovery, which has been adopted by the European paper industry. The ERPC prepares annual progress reports that can be downloaded from its site. These reports, in addition, provide a briefing on different projects EPRC members are undertaking to increase paper collection or recovery rates, improve recovered paper quality and develop new applications for recovered paper fiber.

## Web Address Directory

European Commission – Environment – Waste  
European Commission – Eurostat – Recycling  
– Secondary Material Pricing Indicator  
European Organization for Packaging  
and Environment  
European Recovered Paper Council  
Letsrecycle.com  
Plastics Recyclers Europe  
Plastic Zero  
Recycling Portal  
Research and Markets  
Waste & Resources Action Programme

[tinyurl.com/EC-Enviro](http://tinyurl.com/EC-Enviro)  
[tinyurl.com/EC-Eurostat](http://tinyurl.com/EC-Eurostat)  
[europen-packaging.eu](http://europen-packaging.eu)  
[paperforrecycling.eu](http://paperforrecycling.eu)  
[letsrecycle.com](http://letsrecycle.com)  
[plasticsrecyclers.eu](http://plasticsrecyclers.eu)  
[plastic-zero.com](http://plastic-zero.com)  
[recyclingportal.eu](http://recyclingportal.eu)  
[researchandmarkets.com](http://researchandmarkets.com)  
[wrap.org.uk](http://wrap.org.uk)

## Plastics Recyclers Europe

Plastics Recyclers Europe states that its organizational and individual membership represents approximately 80 percent of the European recycling industry. Earlier this year, the group published a study that claims that by 2020 more than 60 percent of all plastic products used within the EU could be recycled. The report covers current waste generation, recycling and market trends for plastics and then discusses three possible scenarios for plastics recycling, starting with a baseline that assumes no significant changes and leading up to a scenario that shows how the 60 percent recycling rate could be achieved. There is also a description of different market development projects for plastics. Some of those initiative topics: making changes in EU regulatory practices, developing new technologies for utilizing recyclable plastic resins and bolstering recycling certification programs.

## Plastic Zero

Plastic Zero is a European cooperative project between eight partners from the public and private sectors, and it has funding support from the EU. It aims to determine how recycling rates can be improved for a broad range of plastic grades other than PET. There are a number of recently published reports on plastics recycling in Europe that can be downloaded from the group's site including a detailed discussion of current markets for recycled plastic resins as well as key variables affecting resin pricing and market barriers.

## Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP)

WRAP is a nongovernmental organization that is based in the U.K. and receives support from all four governments that comprise the country (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales). Its original goal was to promote market development for recyclable materials and it has since broadened to include waste prevention and resource efficiency. Topics of recent WRAP market development reports include the potential of using plastics derived from electronics recycling in the manufacture of high-end audio products and ways to boost the recycled fiber content in printed magazines.

## News Sources

There are two sources of EU recycling news that are worth looking at:

- Letsrecycle.com (based in the U.K.)
- Recycling Portal (based in Germany)

These sites cover a range of topics falling within waste management, recycling and waste reduction. Visitors can also use search tools on the sites to focus on specific interests. In addition, Letsrecycle has an extensive archive of materials pricing within eight categories and includes organics (composts and mulches) in that rundown.

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