Press Release

# Chemical Recycling legislation should take a precautionary approach to ensure prevention measures remain at the core of the EU's Circular Economy promises

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Today, Zero Waste Europe (ZWE) and the Rethink Plastic Alliance (RPa) published a policy briefing on 7 steps to effectively legislate chemical recycling.

The policy briefing comes at a time where chemical recycling is increasingly being promoted as a solution to the current plastic crisis. The industry claims that chemical recycling technologies will overcome the limitations of mechanical recycling, enabling an entirely circular economy for plastic. Yet the Industry offers very little evidence to support these claims.

On the contrary, a recent review of research shows that chemical recycling faces many limitations, similar to those of mechanical recycling, such as the need to have a relatively pure feedstock. In addition, **questions were raised regarding the environmental and health impacts of chemical recycling processes and their outputs**.

Seeing an increasing number of projects and policies promoting chemical recycling, while the technologies are still surrounded by many uncertainties, ZWE and RPa call for **upholding the precautionary principle and putting in place the right policy framework to regulate chemical recycling**.

The **new policy briefing highlights 7 key steps to effectively regulate chemical recycling so as to avoid a scenario whereby chemical recycling becomes a loophole preventing the achievement of objectives related to the EU circular economy**, climate and sustainable chemical policies.

The policy briefing recommends the following:

1. Review EU waste legislation to introduce harmonised definitions of chemical recycling technologies
2. Clarify the legal status of chemical recycling technologies in the waste hierarchy
3. Limit chemical recycling feedstock to contaminated and degraded durable plastics
4. Evaluate environmental and health impacts of chemical recycling at the industrial level
5. Establish a robust methodology for calculating the climate impact of chemical recycling
6. Develop a standard to establish the actual recycled content qualitatively and quantitatively
7. Limit EU funding to chemical recycling processes that have a lower carbon footprint than the production of plastic from virgin feedstock

Finally, **NGOs warn about putting too much expectation on a solution whose potential is yet to be proven**.

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"*There is a clear risk that putting to much focus on downstream innovation could undermine preventive measures such as limiting the presence of hazardous substances in the materials and products, and waste generation in the first place.*"

- Janek Vahk, Zero Waste Europe Climate, Energy & Air Pollution Policy Coordinator

View the policy briefing