



POLICY BRIEF: PROMOTING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RECYCLED PLASTIC MATERIAL INFORMATION AND SUBSTITUTION PLATFORM

Introduction:

Plastics are widely used in many industries and are a valuable raw material. However, transitioning towards a sustainable and circular economy requires increased uptake of recycled plastic material. One of the major hindrances in this transition is the challenge of finding suitable recycled plastic material grades for specific products. In this context, the Interreg NWE-funded project Di-Plast has developed a platform for recycled plastic material information and substitution, the Matrix tool. This tool facilitates the matching of suitable recycled plastic material with specific product requirements. This policy brief aims to promote the idea behind this tool, highlighting its potential benefits and suggesting ways in which policymakers can support its development and roll-out.

Problem Statement

The plastics industry is a key player in many industries, but its reliance on virgin plastic and lack of sustainable practices poses a significant challenge to the transition towards a circular economy. One of the main challenges faced by companies in the plastic industry is finding suitable recycled plastic material to replace virgin plastic. The current process of finding suitable material that meets the necessary product/process requirements is time-consuming, costly, and complicated. To increase the uptake of recycled plastic material and promote the transition towards a circular economy, there is a need for a platform that simplifies and streamlines the process of finding suitable recycled plastic material. This policy brief proposes the development and roll-out of such a platform and outlines recommendations for how policymakers can support its implementation.

Advantages of a Platform for Recycled Plastic Material Information and Substitution:

A platform for recycled plastic material information and substitution, such as the Matrix tool, which has been developed in the NEW funded project Di-Plast, has different advantages for plastic recyclers and converters. Such a platform can help increase the uptake of recycled plastic material and transform the plastics industry towards a circular state.



- Firstly, converters can request recycled plastic material that meets their required specifications, increasing the demand for recycled materials.
- Secondly, suppliers can sell their recycled plastic material more efficiently by targeting specific converter needs.
- Thirdly, converters can request tests to verify the properties of the recycled plastic material, ensuring that it meets quality requirements.
- Finally, the platform increases the visibility of supply and demand regarding recycled plastic material, connecting converters and suppliers more easily and facilitating the sourcing of recycled plastic material.

Recommendations:

Regional agencies or governments can play an important role in supporting the development and roll-out of such a platform. Policymakers can support this initiative by including it in their activities aimed at promoting the local industry's transition towards a circular economy. For example, regional governments can fund a project or initiative that encourages and supports suitable companies to actively participate in this platform. Policymakers can also support the development of the Matrix tool through project funding, financial support or legislative support from sectoral agencies or plastics associations.

- *Establish partnerships* with relevant stakeholders such as waste management companies, recyclers, plastics manufacturers, and other industry players to encourage and facilitate the use of such a platform or the Matrix tool itself in their operations.
- *Fund a regional project or initiative*, in which 100-200 suitable companies are encouraged and supported to participate actively in this initiative and the further development of the platform and tool.
- *Encourage regional governments* to support the development and rollout of such a platform in their respective regions. This can be done through regional programs, project funding or financial and legislative support of sectoral agencies or plastics associations. The Matrix tool or its openly available source code could form the basis.
- *Develop training programs and educational resources* to help companies understand how to use the Matrix tool effectively, as well as the benefits of using recycled plastic material.
- *Promote collaboration* between different regions, industries, and stakeholders to share best practices, knowledge, and experiences on the use of recycled plastic material.

By implementing these recommendations, regional governments and industry players can work towards a more circular economy for plastics, reduce waste and pollution, and contribute to a more sustainable future.



Conclusion:

In conclusion, a platform or tool like the Matrix tool has the potential to significantly contribute to the uptake of recycled plastic material and the transformation of the plastics industry towards a more circular state. By supporting the development and roll-out of this tool, policymakers can promote a more sustainable future, increasing the visibility of supply and demand for recycled plastic material and facilitating the sourcing of recycled plastic material.