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Adapting to single-use plastic bans: NGOs, politicians and business associations call for a paradigm shift towards reusable packaging in Europe

- European Green Deal should promote reuse systems throughout the EU
- Reuse systems are essential to reduce packaging waste, create green jobs and to achieve European climate objectives
- Organisers of the 8th European REUSE Conference demand binding targets, financial incentives, clear legal definitions and transparent labelling to promote reusable packaging and targeted economic support for innovation.

Berlin/Brussels, 6th July 2021: To accelerate the transition to a circular economy, the EU and its member states must adopt ambitious measures for to consistently promote reusable packaging systems. Reusable solutions for beverage bottles, take-away food containers and coffee cups as well as for B2B and B2C transport packaging must become the norm. This is what the organisers of today's 8th European Reuse Conference, Deutsche Umwelthilfe (DUH), the European Federation of Associations of Beer and Beverages Wholesalers (CEGROBB), the Association of Private Breweries Germany and Reloop Platform, as well as the Austrian Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology Leonore Gewessler and the Member of the European Parliament for the Greens, Sven Giegold, are calling for.

In order for reuse systems to become established throughout Europe, policy-makers need to introduce binding waste reduction and reuse targets. Furthermore, the dissemination of those systems must be supported through financial incentives, clear legal definitions that sensibly distinguish disposable from reusable, and transparent labelling. In light of the new European bans on certain single-use plastic products that have come into force on 3rd July, the EU needs to support environmentally-friendly reusable solutions with binding legislation in order to prevent a similarly harmful shift towards alternative single-use materials.

"According to the European waste hierarchy states, waste prevention is the top priority. It is about time for the EU to put this principle into practice. Through its many reuse cycles, reusable packaging does not only reduce waste, but also conserves resources and makes a substantial contribution to the achievement of both European and national climate objectives. Today, that potential is still widely untapped. To change that, refillable bottles and other types of reusable packaging must be made available and used more widely. That shift will only be possible if binding reduction and reuse targets are implemented, and financial incentives are set to make reuse more economically attractive. The fact that the EU Commission is currently considering such measures shows that Europe is ready for reuse. The Green Deal provides a good basis for introducing reuse-friendly policies. Now, the EU needs to turn rhetoric into action," say DUH, CEGROBB, Private Breweries Germany and Reloop.

"Reuse and refillables represent true waste prevention and are therefore at the top of our waste hierarchy. Unfortunately, the share of refillable beverage packaging has decreased drastically over the past 20 years. This is where we are taking countermeasures. In order to bring refillables back to retail and households, with the revision of the Austrian Waste Management Law, we introduced an

obligation for retailers to offer a minimum percentage of refillables on their shelves. With the mandatory offer of refillables, we give consumers real freedom of choice when it comes to sustainable packaging. Because everyone who wants to buy refillables should be able to do so,” states the Austrian Federal Minister for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology, Leonore Gewessler.

“The revision of the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive offers an opportunity to make reusable packaging systems mandatory across Europe and to develop them further. So far, too much emphasis has been placed on recycling instead of actually avoiding waste and reusing packaging. It is not enough to ban single-use plastic products if reusable alternatives are not available. Prevention and reusability must be promoted through binding targets and focussed economic support of reuse systems. A change from a linear packaging industry towards circular reuse systems can also become a job engine for Europe. In Germany alone, 145,000 people are employed in the reusable beverage packaging sector. The employment ratio of reusable to disposable in the mineral water sector is five to one,” explains Sven Giegold, member of the European Parliament.

At the conference, innovative approaches to reusable packaging and policies to promote their EU-wide implementation will be presented and discussed with over 400 high-level representatives from politics, industry, research and civil society.

Link:

Background information on the 8th European REUSE Conference <https://www.duh.de/reuse2021/>

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