

Mr. Karmenu Vella
European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 22 June 2015

CC: First Vice-President Timmermans and Vice-President Katainen

Beverage packaging: European jobs and waste legislation in serious danger

Dear Commissioner Vella,

Previous achievements in waste prevention in Europe are in serious danger. With growing concern we note that there are a significant number of companies and hard discount retailers shifting away from using packaging systems that prevent waste. For example, reusable packaging systems are shifting towards dubious and so-called “green” one-way packaging. This negative development cannot be left unchecked and needs a strong answer from the European Commission, particularly with regard to the announcement of a new and ambitious circular economy package.

The world’s largest beverage producer, Coca-Cola, provides a striking example showing the shift away from environmentally-friendly and waste-preventing reusable systems. The company recently announced that they would discontinue a large part of their reusable bottles scheme in Germany by eliminating the 0.5 and 1.5 litre refillable bottles. This will have a negative spill over effect on other companies. If Coca-Cola switches all of its packaging to single-use over refillable containers, the entire German refillable bottle share of the market will decline drastically, other manufacturers will soon follow suit and the entire reusable system could face collapse. As a consequence, up to 150,000 jobs are in danger. And this is just one example for this negative trend. Retailer chains of hard discounters have already switched to mostly single-use containers.

All over Europe, we’ve been witnessing what is being promoted as the “greening” of packaging. But these decisions will lead to even more packaging waste (note that 25-50 one-way bottles will replace each refillable bottle removed from the market). This is not the right direction in terms of closing the circle and moving up the waste hierarchy.

Therefore we reiterate our joint appeal to you, Mr Commissioner, and it is more urgent than ever: Waste prevention by way of **reusable packaging must be protected, supported and promoted by the new Circular Economy Package**. Refillables are the ideal way of meeting the highest requirement of the European waste hierarchy as well as a key driver for reduced marine litter in the future. However, refillables are in serious danger all over Europe and therefore they are in need of your full support.

Please ensure your full support for reusable packaging throughout Europe with the help of the new Circular Economy Package!

Yours faithfully,

Piotr Barczak, Policy Officer on Waste at the European Environmental Bureau

On behalf of the below mentioned non-governmental organisations



Friends of the Earth Europe



EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL BUREAU

Deutsche Umwelthilfe



Suomen Luonnonsuojeluliitto

Coastwatch



HUMUSZ szövetség



Za Zemiata Friends of the Earth Bulgaria



Ecologistes de Catalunya

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Bond Beter Leefmilieu

KOEPSEL VAN MILIEUVERENIGINGEN Vlaanderen vzw



zerowaste romania



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