

Realistic but ambitious European aluminium packaging recycling targets needed

21 September 2017 – On the occasion of its annual aluminium packaging seminar held this year in Rotterdam (the Netherlands), European Aluminium calls for realistic but ambitious aluminium packaging recycling targets.

Following the largely positive outcome of the vote of the European Parliament earlier this year and the start of the so-called triadogue discussions with the Council of Ministers on the EU Circular Economy package, European Aluminium calls upon the EU Member States to endorse the recycling targets originally tabled by the European Commission. This means that most countries have to meet a separate aluminium packaging recycling target of 75% by the year 2025.

Mr Andy Doran, Chair of European Aluminium's Packaging Group is confident that industry can meet this target, providing that "*Member States make the necessary investments in innovative collection and sorting methods and that all available recycling options are taken into account. This includes recovering metal from incinerator bottom ash as well as through modern recycling processes such as pyrolysis.*"

European Aluminium recognizes that several Member States still need to catch up with the more advanced countries in reducing and recycling their packaging waste. They need more time to phase-out the landfilling of recyclables and to implement more efficient collection systems for all packaging. Ultimately, this should result in higher quantities of higher quality used packaging, directly available for closed loop recycling. Used aluminium packaging certainly fits this model as aluminium, due to its material characteristics doesn't change during the remelting phase and can thus be recycled again and again, without losing its original properties.

Mr Doran admits that the EU proposal to shift the measurement point to after the final sorting phase, just before the recycling phase will pose extra challenges. "*We need to measure real recycling to convince European consumers that collecting and sorting makes a lot of sense and really contributes to the Circular Economy,*" said Mr Doran. He welcomes the trend to move towards separate collection systems for the main packaging materials and items, including aluminium beverage cans, aerosol containers, foil containers, pet food trays. But he also cautioned "*not to overlook the smaller items such as aluminium bottle closures, coffee capsules and even chocolate wraps, which can still have a positive recycling value.*"

European Aluminium, therefore, welcomes the recent developments in the Netherlands, where an increasing number of municipalities have adopted an extended version of the PMD collection system¹. However, it remains important to use similar collection systems country-wide, with clear and consistent sorting instructions for the citizens and to have sorting plants equipped with the latest technologies, including advanced Eddy-Current separators for recovering non-ferrous metals such as aluminium.

¹ 'PMD' stands for Plastics, Metals and Drink cartons. In most European countries a yellow or blue coloured bin or sack is used for collecting these packaging items.

About European Aluminium:

European Aluminium, founded in 1981, is the association that represents the whole value chain of the aluminium industry in Europe. We actively engage with decision-makers and the wider stakeholder community to promote the outstanding properties of aluminium, secure growth and optimise the contribution our metal can make to meeting Europe's sustainability challenges. Through environmental and technical expertise, economic and statistical analysis, scientific research, education and sharing of best practices, public affairs and communication activities, European Aluminium promotes the use of aluminium as a permanent material that is part of the solution to achieving sustainable goals, while maintaining and improving the image of the industry, of the material and of its applications among their stakeholders..