



## **Contribution to the EESC Event “EU Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy” (Brussels, 10 April 2018)**

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### **Summary – Key points**

- The biodiversity challenges related with plastics are impressive: by 2050, an estimated 99% of sea birds will have ingested plastic, and there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans.
- In any case, plastic is a good material, it is light and it is cheap and it is part of our society: in certain cases plastics can even add an environmental value, like in reducing transportation weight. The real challenge is to find the balance between the three sustainability pillars: economy, society and environment.
- The plastic challenge is a global challenge, for which international tools are needed; surely even beyond the EU, but it is very good to start from the EU level, also as a good example for the rest of the world.
- We need to take action quickly: because the issue is serious and urgent, but also because of the current momentum. Not only there is also a parallel discussion on the future EU budget, which means that now financial resources can be planned: more importantly, there is tremendous public support.
- The recycling component of the Plastic Strategy is very important, but surely more can be done: we should focus on prevention and avoidance. We not only need to recycle and reuse more, but we also need to use less plastic: from quantity to quality.
- Probably we also need to dare to say that there is a need to reduce plastics production at large by using more environment friendly alternatives where possible.
- From a policy point of view, and focusing on demand, there are options which could be explored, such as a tax differentiation of recycled products or products that incorporate recycled raw materials from other products with greater environmental impact or that are disposable; or policies to promote the reduction of disposables, such as taxes.
- To conclude, my short message today is focused on the current momentum, and consequently on the opportunity we have to make a difference for the environment, but also for the other two pillars of sustainability. It all starts by being bold and ambitious, and the conditions in this case are met: there is very strong public and political support, ongoing relevant legislative and policy processes (single use plastics, EU Plastics Strategy), and the reform of the EU budget is happening now.