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PRESS RELEASE

From: ECP4, the European Composites, Plastics and Polymer Processing Platform.

Research investment essential for plastics and composites to be globally competitive

The Annual Meeting in Guimarães, Portugal, of ECP4 focused on the Strategic Research Needs of the European Plastics and Composites Industry on 18th May.

The meeting, co-organized by ECP4, The European Composites, Plastics and Polymer Processing Platform and PIEP, Innovation in Polymer Engineering, was opened by the Portuguese Minister of Economy, Mr. Manuel Caldeira Cabral, confirming the commitment of the Portuguese Authorities in the promotion of the research and innovation activities and the importance of the plastics and composites sector.

EU pump priming for research essential

The President of ECP4, Mr. Clement de Meersman said "the automotive, medicine, pharma and building sectors cannot exist without the added value of the plastics and composites sector". We are "one of the hero sectors". To facilitate a discussion on Plastics and Composites strategic research needs, ECP4 had produced a Strategic Research Agenda. Mr. de Meersman said the objectives were to ensure "we remain globally competitive, kept Europe's lead in technical innovation increased investment and employment and met circular economy and societal challenges". He said the SRA will demonstrate the benefits of more research and outline future strategic research needs". The SRA outlines 10 key sectors. Mr de Meersman said "pump-priming support from the European Commission is essential... a small amount of EU funding has and will give a huge payback in commercial and other success". "Once manufacturing moves offshore, R+D will follow".

EU Commission call on Industry to double research investment

Also speaking at the ECP4 meeting was Mr. José -Lorenzo Vallés, Head of

the Unit for Advanced Manufacturing Systems and Biotechnologies at DG Research and Innovation of the European Commission. He said that "the plastic industry is one of the areas of global leadership for Europe and will make a key contribution to fulfilling our Europe 2020 goals on sustainability and energy efficiency". He said the industry was at the "forefront of innovation" and he called for the industry to "increase the leverage effect of public funding by, for example, doubling its level of investment in research and innovation activities".

Mr. Vallés emphasized the importance of the New Plastics Strategy for the Circular Economy, "an innovation led driver for a greener Europe". He called for a "focus on the markets of the future with transformation of knowledge into market-oriented outputs".

Innovation help needed on plastic waste

Mr. Mats Linder from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation invited ECP4 members to join the momentum created by the New Plastics Economy Initiative, which is launched in London this month, particularly on crucial innovation topics. He called for ushering in a "new plastics economy that works, with a functioning after-use market, a drastic reduction of plastics leakage into the environment, and de-coupling plastics from a fossil feedstock".

Editor notes:

ECP4, The European Composites, Plastics and Polymer Processing Platform was founded in 2011. Its membership comprises of 18 Research Centers, 3 European associations and 4 regional clusters, all strongly networked.

ECP4 brings innovation partners together to identify opportunities for collaborative Research and Development efforts which yield industrial innovation.

The objectives of the platform are:

- To provide networking and collaboration among research institutions and the industry.
- To facilitate the access of the European plastics industry to EU research programs, thus enabling SME's to innovate, gain competitiveness and fulfil sustainable goals.
- To communicate on new technologies and their relevance for the plastics converters and the composites industry.



The conference was opened by the Portuguese Minister of Economy, Mr. Manuel Caldeira Cabral. From left to right: Mr. Domingos Bragança, President of the Municipality of Guimarães, Mr. Carlos Bernardos, Mr. José -Lorenzo Vallés and Mr. Clement de Meersman.