Press release

**Proper plastic waste management demands different approaches**

**Ljubljana, 29th November 2019 – Participants at the Closing Conference of the RETRACKING project shared their experiences in managing waste from composites and other plastic materials and discussed which solutions are most appropriate and feasible. Slovenia and the world now face major challenges in this area. Plastic covers many types of materials with different properties and processing requirements.**

Plastics and composites are excellent materials, with a long life span, good production and processing costs and great potential for use. We, as a society, should value these properties and make better use of them, since it is best to prevent the generation of waste by extending the life of the products, maintaining them and reusing them.

Where waste production cannot be avoided, with the proper recovery or recycling of waste plastics, these materials are returned to the material flow of the economy. The latter challenge is addressed by the RETRACKING project. It focuses on the possibilities of processing composite materials in terms of the development of new technologies and business models of the circular economy, as presented by **Primož Oprčkal**, ZAG.

In the production of composite products and after their end of life results in wastes we are currently not able to properly manage. Companies are trying to reduce quantities of waste, but unfortunately they cannot guarantee production with zero waste, said **Helena Saje**, VEPLAS, and **Vlasta Hafnar**, Elan. Companies have been facing a much higher cost of waste management since the start of 2019 and solutions are urgently needed, they stressed.

How the circular economy works was presented by **Giorgio Betteto**, Gees Recycling, and **Marko Petelin**, Infordata Systems. The companies have collaborated in digitalising the recycling process and setting up the possibility to track recycled materials using modern technology. Possible uses of reclaimed recycled material were presented by **Nevij Baruca**, Technol, who emphasized that only a critical level of the mental effort of a group of people striving for the same goal is needed to bring the circular management model close to the location of the source of waste.

When plastic materials become waste, it is important to recognize them and having the possibility of thermal recovery, as a more suitable alternative to landfilling, when material recycling is no longer possible due to waste properties. **Tanja Ljubič Mlakar**, Salonit Anhovo, spoke about the possibilities and benefits of thermal waste treatment. She stressed that waste must be properly prepared before being taken into the cement plant and that the share of waste as a fuel does not affect emissions. The experience of the public waste management companies with different waste streams and their identification was presented by **Jože Gregorič**, Voka Snaga, who emphasized that in the coming years both the public and private waste management sectors will have to transform into the sector of secondary raw materials. Many transformation processes have already begun.

Konferenco smo zaključili s pogledom naprej. Raziskovalci, **Peter Fajs**, TECOS, **Mitja Jermol**, IJS in **Lucio Marquardt**, ENECOLAB, so predstavili tehnologije pridobivanja visokokakovostnih goriv iz odpadkov in novo generacijo izdelkov iz kompozitnih materialov na osnovi odpadne plastike in papirja za potrebe avtomobilskega, embalažnega in gradbenega sektorja.

We concluded the conference with prospects of the future. Researchers, **Peter Fajs**, TECOS, **Mitja Jermol**, IJS, and **Lucio Marquardt**, ENECOLAB, presented technologies for the production of high quality waste fuels and a new generation of composite materials based on waste plastics and paper for the automotive, packaging and construction sectors.

**About Retracking**

As part of the Retracking project, we are developing a competitive model for the proper management of waste containing glass fiber reinforced polymer composites (GFRP). Improved visibility and traceability of the material flow will create conditions for the transition from linear to circular economy. The project is part of the Interreg V-A Italy-Slovenia cooperation program, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

**Project partners:**

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