



# WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2022

**TOWARDS A RESILIENT PLANET:  
ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE FUTURE**

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## Plastics and Circular Economy: Making Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Workable

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### THEMATIC TRACK SUMMARY

Venue: Bhadra

Date: February 17, 2022

Time: 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM (IST)

#### Suggested Citation

World Sustainable Development Summit (2022), Plastics and Circular Economy: Making Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Workable, Thematic Track Summary (Rapporteurs: Kartikey Sharma and Dennis Roy), New Delhi: The Energy and Resources Institute.

## Actionable Messages

**Message 1:** Currently, in waste management policies there is little to no stress on how to reduce consumption. More educational training sessions must be undertaken to spread awareness about needless consumption practices.

**Message 2:** Plastic credits are an excellent mechanism to improve financing prowess within the waste management segment and make way for large scale research to take place for its augmentation.

**Message 3:** The policy focus from corporate social responsibility practitioners should specifically be oriented towards the aspect of waste collection and we can better manage the points of collection across different regions.

**Message 4:** Waste generators can act as an extremely valuable catalyst within the entire supply chain process by aiding in their segregation.



## Narrative

The track focused on how the existing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations are not enough to deal with the exhaustive waste collection of plastics across the nation. Integration of the informal waste collectors into the formal system, focusing on upstream waste management practices, and bringing community actors into the process were some of the key aspects that the discussion revolved around. The track highlighted the gaps between the literature and the data available for the plastic production, recycling and waste management. In the entire waste management process, there is little to no stress on how to reduce consumption. More educational training sessions must be undertaken to spread awareness about needless consumption practices. Plastic credits are an excellent mechanism to improve financing prowess within the waste management segment and make way for wide scale research to take place for its augmentation.

**Dr Heinz Schandl, Senior Principal Scientist, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, and Coordinator- CSIRO Circular Economy Initiative,** gave the introductory remarks about the collaborative project between Indian and Australian institutions on 'Reducing Plastic pollution in India', through his presentation. **Dr Schandl** emphasized the statistics of recycling plastic waste materials, how globally 350 million tonnes of plastic materials are produced yearly but only 10% of it is recycled. He highlighted that India produces 16 million tonnes of plastics yearly, with a growth rate of 7% each year. He stressed on the point that the collaborative project aims to find the magnitude of the plastic flow, to understand the plastic supply chain, identifying innovation in technology both recycling, product design and extended management and establishes a number of demonstration projects which shows how to improve current plastic economy and turn it into a more collaborative circular economy.

**Mr Hans-Peter Egler, Director, Sustainable Infrastructure and Public Affairs, South Pole,** further commented on the ongoing discussion about the global plastics problem, and what India can do for it, through his presentation. **Mr Egler** highlighted the importance of extended producer responsibility in India, to tackle the plastics problem, as a large amount of plastic waste is being generated daily, which ends up in marine bodies eventually, which then causes degradation of marine ecosystems and lifeforms. Urban cities and other developed regions are the major stakeholders for the production of plastic wastes and hence should take much responsibility for it. **Mr Egler** then concluded his note by stressing on the point that the extended producer responsibility regulations in urban cities and the developed areas, monitored by the Pollution Control Boards can act as a key role in integrating EPR rules with cities obligations of waste management.

**Mr Rajesh Pahwa, Founder & CEO, 21st Century Polymers,** further carried on the ongoing plastic recycling dialogue, by introducing the work done by his company 21<sup>st</sup> century polymers on the recycling of engineering plastics done by recycling units all over India. **Mr Pahwa** then shed light on the project done with the partnerships with TERI, UNDP and GIZ. **Mr Pahwa** then concluded his note by being vocal about how his company recycles fish nets which are a major source of marine ecosystem degradation, by incorporating the High Density Polyethylene (HDPE) present in fish nets to make chairs.

**Mr Ranjit Singh, Founder, AspireLabs,** carried on the panel discussion on EPR regulations and policies. He highlighted the fact that EPR will successful only when its fully incorporated into the overall strategy of waste management and when it helps to promote greater amount of plastic waste management. **Mr Singh** pointed out the strategy for EPR focussing on reuse, reduce and recycle, being less focussed on reduction of plastic waste. Another point raise by him was the lack of intel on source segregation by these EPR policies and strategies. He exclaimed that this can be mitigated by making the consumers aware on source segregation. Technology and collaborations are major factors which determine the overall success of EPR strategies and polices. He ended his note on the fact that there a market for recycled goods must be there for finance allocation in this industry.

**Dr Shilpi Kapur, Vice President, EMC,** further carried on her insights on the panel discussion, through her presentation, she highlighted the extended producer responsibility in the Indian context and the need for circularity for plastics in India. **Dr Kapur,** stressed that the circular economy has potential to generate economic benefits like competitiveness, improved business opportunities and also provides platform for innovation in this sector. Circular economy as stated by **Dr Kapur,** has synergies with various other policy areas, and hence circular economy for plastics

is hence a key approach to decarbonization and will certainly facilitate the transition to net zero. **Dr Kapur** then shed light on the challenges to implementing EPR strategies and further she ended her note on the point that the difficulty to regulate plastics is a major roadblock and that accountability and mobilization of existing financial funds is extremely crucial.

**Ms Ekta Narain, Co-founder, Recykal**, the final panellist on the EPR discussion shared her insight on the same by stating the work of her company Recykal. On how they leverage both physical and digital solutions to empower the waste management and to provide genuine circular economy solutions. **Ms Narain** stated that the connecting the sellers and the buyers of recyclables is much important for supporting this ecosystem, which would then bring about traceable transaction of materials. **Ms Narain** acknowledged the partnerships with GIZ for the project – ‘Baseline study with GIZ on effectiveness of EPR on impact on ocean bound plastic’ in Thiruvanthapuram, Kerala. Her last submission for the panel discussion was on the point to circulate plastics in a way that is in the ecosystem and out of the environment.

## Making Words Count @WSDS 2022

“ While the current EPR practices lack mechanism, the private sector and plastic credits can help streamline the financing process and improve waste management strategies.

**Mr Hans-Peter Egler**  
*Director, Sustainable Infrastructure and Public Affairs, South Pole*

“ While technology plays a big role in plastic recycling, a recycling unit in the same state is a must to make a project sustainable. A workable pricing system should be the focus of products created from recycled plastic in order to improve their demand.

**Mr Rajesh Pahwa**  
*Founder & CEO 21st Century Polymers*

“ To embrace a circular economy for plastics we need to radically look at a separate policy to deal with bulk generators. The reduce reuse and recycle policy lays extremely less stress on the reduced consumption of products. This needs to change dramatically.

**Mr Ranjit Singh**  
*Founder – AspireLabs*

“ EPR is largely seen as a downstream policy and the upstream policy narrative is significantly missing. India has a USD 500 billion potential to economize value through circular economy.

**Dr Shilpi Kapur**  
*Vice President, Environmental Management Centre*

“ A single EPR framework is not a conducive solution. Since plastic is now part of all products across the value chain, we need to look at involving stakeholders from diverse industrial backgrounds. The notion of circularity has to be developed in tandem with the community, since they are the ones who will be determine how it will be used eventually.

**Dr Lakshmi Raghupathy**  
*Former Director MoEF&CC, Adviser, Foundation for Innovative Packaging and Sustainability*

“ We need to look at waste generators as the catalyst for streamlining the entire waste management process.

**Ms Ekta Narain**  
*Co-founder, Recykal*