

## **As Öko Pannon celebrates its 15 year anniversary, its future remains unclear**

**Brussels, 23 June 2011:** Öko Pannon, the Hungarian member of PRO EUROPE, celebrates today its 15th anniversary. György Viszkei, Executive Director of Öko Pannon and Joachim Quoden, Managing Director of PRO EUROPE will welcome around 150 guests from the political world and industry sector to commemorate the non-profit organisations achievements over the last decade and a half.

The celebrations take place at a time where the future of the Hungarian packaging industry is uncertain. Just a few days ago, the Hungarian government published a draft law introducing a new packaging tax which would abolish the packaging industry's exemption from fees. So far, companies that were able to demonstrate that they are participating in an approved system (e.g. paying fees to Öko Pannon to take care of recycling) were exempted from the packaging tax. The new draft law does not provide for this exemption anymore and instead foresees the creation of a new authority administering the income from the tax, not only for packaging but for all other producer responsibility sectors like WEEE and batteries as well.

If the law is adopted as it is today, the major achievements of Öko Pannon over the last 15 years would fade away. This would mean a massive step backwards. PRO EUROPE and its members strongly oppose the plans of the Hungarian government to replace the current well-functioning Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) system whereby producers are taking care of their own recycling with a recovery fee. EPR has proven to be a very successful system in the packaging sector in Hungary as well as in other countries of PRO EUROPE's members. The new authority would put a huge administrative and financial burden on companies whereas the current system works effectively. Hungary would then be the only EU Member State with a state-run system in the packaging sector. Since the proposed law does not contain any obligation for the state authority it is unclear how Hungary will fulfil European targets in the future.

Also, Commissioner Potocnik has highlighted the success of producer responsibility during his intervention at the 5th PRO EUROPE congress in Brussels in October 2010 and EPR will be one of the key tools to boost resource efficiency in the future policy of the European Union.

Joachim Quoden, Managing Director of PRO EUROPE declared: "I sincerely hope that the Hungarian government will change its mind and stick to its current system which has proven to be successful over the last years. Since the establishment of Öko Pannon, a collection and recycling system has been established all over Hungary which has always fulfilled (and exceeded) all national and European targets."

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About PRO EUROPE

PRO EUROPE s.p.r.l. (Packaging Recovery Organisation Europe), founded in 1995, is the umbrella organisation for the packaging and packaging waste recovery schemes which mainly use the "Green Dot" trademark. PRO EUROPE acts as the authoritative voice and common policy platform for its members, representing the interests of all packaging recovery and recycling organisations mainly using the "Green Dot".