

European media get a first-hand look at the flexible PVC value chain

Ravenna and Ferrara, 6-7 October: The European Council for Plasticisers and Intermediates (ECPI) organised in early October a second edition of its annual Media Field Trip, which this time took place in Italy. Journalists from specialised European trade media had the opportunity to learn about the work across the PVC value-chain by visiting Vulcaflex, a synthetic leather producer, and Vinyloop, specialised in composite recycling. The media trip was supported by the VinylPlus sustainability programme.



The visit started with an information session to present the most recent facts and figures about the European plasticiser



industry as well as recent regulatory developments. ECPI's Manager, S. Content, highlighted that "plasticisers are used in a very wide range of sectors. Their durability and high performance makes them suitable for literally hundreds of flexible PVC applications, from flooring to wire and cables, sport goods or automobiles". Content also shared some of the activities ECPI is carrying out to communicate on the benefits of all plasticisers.

R. Bozzi, Plant Manager at Vulcaflex, and G. Fossanova, Sales and Marketing Director, walked participants through the many applications for PVC film including packaging, fashion and automotive, the latter representing around 60% of the company's business. Journalists witnessed the preparation of flexible PVC resins and coatings followed by refining and design. Vulcaflex is one of twelve companies in the world which are able to compete on the international market for flexible PVC films and sheets.

On day two, the group moved to Vinyloop in Ferrara where they were introduced to VinylPlus by A. Sevenster, ECVI's Technical and Environmental Affairs Manager, who explained the evolution of this sustainability initiative since it was launched in 2000.

VinylPlus has made great progress over the past 14 years thanks to the commitment of the entire PVC industry, including plasticisers' producers who are deeply involved in the promotion of the sustainable use of additives. "The mission of the Vinyl programme is to minimise the impact of PVC products throughout their entire life-cycle and improve their contribution towards sustainable development", explained Sevenster, "This, of course, includes the promotion of PVC recycling as it is the case of VinyLoop".





P. Groppi, Managing Director of Vinyloop, introduced the company which was set up by SolVin as a technology-intensive prototype to recycle PVC from wire and cables as well as tarpaulins through a sophisticated chemical process. The visit to the plant gave participants a taste of the complexity of the Vinyloop's innovative flexible PVC recycling process capable of dissolving, sorting and drying post-consumer waste composites to be used in high quality PVC compounds.

The main applications for the PVC compounds produced by Vinyloop are garden hoses, geo-membranes, foils, mats and plates, shoe soles and boots. The Italian company FLAG is a great example of how Vinyloop's recyclates is being used to make flexible PVC membranes to be used in tunnels, buried galleries and other structures, as well as underground car parks.

The participating journalist had the opportunity to learn how continued investments, innovative technologies and good practices can make the flexible PVC value-chain truly sustainable.