

Proposal for the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation

- new opportunity for the circular economy

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The Commission has presented on 30 November a proposal for a new Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation.

- a major initiative for a circular economy of packaging, which means to prevent waste and to make packaging sustainable.
- part of the Green Deal and the new CEAP = mandate the Commission to work on the generation of packaging waste and to revise the current packaging directive that dates back to 1994.
- the choice of a Regulation motivated by a strong demand for greater harmonisation and uniform application of the rules.

Main problems highlighted in the impact assessment:

- the growing generation of waste and a high level of avoidable packaging, notably because of the increase of single-use and too much plastics.
- the barriers to packaging circularity with too low recycling rates (particularly for plastics) and with confusing packaging labelling for consumers sorting.
- the low levels of recycled content in packaging.
 1. the fragmented markets that prevent cost-efficient waste management.

Overview of the packaging waste generation:

- Consumers think that we generate too much packaging and part of it is unnecessary. On average, each European generates almost 180 kg of packaging waste per year. And without action, according to estimations, the EU would see a further 19% increase in packaging waste by 2030 compared to 2018, and for plastic packaging waste even a 46% increase and 86% by 2040.
- Packaging is also one of the main users of virgin materials : 40% of plastics and 50% of paper in the EU is used for packaging. it is not without environmental impact on natural resources.
- We cannot focus our efforts only on recycling, as it is too often suggested. Progress in recycling is offset because of the increase in waste generation. Over the last ten years, packaging waste increased by +20.5 % when recycling increased by only 6.62 %. And even if recycling reached 64,4% for all materials in the EU in 2018 (it was 60,4% in 2008), it is not enough to change the trend. Even though recycling rates have increased, waste generated is growing faster. Packaging is growing faster than GDP and recycling, and this growth is mainly the result of the increase in single use.

The new rules in our packaging regulation aim to stop this trend:

- For consumers, they will ensure reusable packaging options, get rid of unnecessary packaging, limit overpackaging, and provide clear labels to support correct recycling.
- For the industry, we aim to create new business opportunities (notably in reuse), to decrease the need for virgin materials, and to boost recycling capacity
- Overall, this is also to make Europe less dependent on primary resources and external suppliers, and to put the packaging sector on track for climate neutrality by 2050.

Three main objectives of the revision:

- to prevent the generation of packaging waste: this is to reduce it in quantity, to restrict unnecessary packaging and to promote reusable and refillable packaging solutions.
- to boost high quality ('closed loop') recycling: this is to make all packaging on the EU market recyclable by 2030.
- to reduce the need for primary natural resources and to create a well-functioning market for secondary raw materials.

Main measures of the proposal:

- on waste prevention, the headline target is to reduce packaging waste by 15% by 2040 per Member State per capita, compared to 2018;
- to foster reuse or refill of packaging, companies will have to offer to consumers a certain percentage of their products in reusable or refillable packaging;
- to address unnecessary packaging, certain forms of packaging will be banned (eg single-use packaging for food and beverages);
- Measures to make packaging fully recyclable by 2030: design criteria for packaging; creating mandatory deposit return systems for plastic bottles and aluminium cans; making it clear which types of packaging can be compostable.
- Mandatory rates of recycled content that producers have to include in new plastic packaging.
- Tackle the confusion about sorting: packaging will carry a label (harmonised symbols in the EU) showing the composition of packaging and in which waste stream it should go (waste collection containers with the same labels).