

"EPR as tool for plastic packaging circularity"

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The Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) model is based on the polluter-pays principle, which aims to include producers of material goods in the management and treatment of waste and keep raw materials and goods in the economic circle. The integration of EPR schemes in national legislation then sets clear objectives for circular economy: consumer waste prevention, eco-design of materials, optimization of waste collection with local authorities and development of new circular economic systems.

Thus, the structuring of an EPR sector has several advantages; it allows the involvement of all actors, whether public, economic or citizens, in a structured and sustainable framework dedicated to circularity and carbon neutrality. At an international level, EPR deepens the social and environmental responsibility of companies, thanks to the traceability of the value chain and the better coordination of everyone's actions.

For several years now, international bodies have been addressing the issue of combating plastic waste pollution (G7 in Charlevoix in 2018, G20 in Osaka in 2019). The PROs from all over the world welcome the commitment of civil society, companies and governments to work together to define and build common responses to this global challenge. International cooperation has reached an important milestone with the adoption on 2 March 2022 by the United Nations Environment Assembly of a resolution to end plastic pollution and to reach a legally binding international agreement by 2024. In the wake of these growing concerns, on 28 July 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring that all people on the planet have the right to a healthy environment, a right that the circular economy can help make real, everywhere and for everyone.

In this context, the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) model has a key role to play. EPR systems are an essential instrument to finance the collection and environmentally sound treatment of waste, as well as to support the design and production of goods that take into account and facilitate the efficient use of resources throughout their life cycle, including their repair, reuse, dismantling and recycling. PROs, in particular those in charge of household packaging, help to improve the management of the end-of-life of plastic products but also to encourage reduction at source and eco-design.

Legislation & Policies on plastic packaging waste management

EU has been recognized as a leader in circular economy, spreading best practices to countries worldwide. The EU legislation adopted in 2018 (PPWD and WFD) and 2019 (SUP) and relevant policies and measures promote circular economy via setting ambitious targets for plastic packaging recycling as for example:

	PPWD	SUP	EU Plastics Strategy	Circular Plastics Alliance	European Plastics Pact
Targets	65% recycling of all packaging waste by 2025	77% collection of plastic beverage bottles by 2025	By 2030, all plastics packaging placed on the EU market is either reusable or can be recycled in a cost-effective manner	By 2025, 10 million tonnes of recycled plastics to be used in European products	By 2025, all single-use plastics products and packaging will be reusable or at least 100% recyclable
	70% recycling of all packaging waste by 2030	90% collection of plastic beverage bottles by 2029	By 2025, 10 million tonnes of recycled plastics find their way into new products on the EU market		Net reduction in use by 2025 compared to 2017

	50% recycling of plastic packaging by 2025	25% of recycled content in plastic beverage bottles by 2025			At least 70% of all single-use plastics products are recycled to a high standard
	55% recycling of plastic packaging by 2030	30% of recycled content in plastic beverage bottles by 2030			30% recycled content in single-use plastic products and packaging by 2025
					Specific targets for: PET bottles 55%; Milk bottles 45%; PE bottles 30%, PET trays 55%; PP PTTs 20%; PE films 18%

While EPR has been recognized as an efficient tool for plastic packaging circularity, a study carried out by EXPRA, showed further some key characteristics in countries on track to meet 2025 plastic packaging recycling target, as follows:

- Mature systems in place with good communication to citizens on how to recycle.
- A structured national approach to collect all plastic packaging, rather than having an uncontrolled market where only higher value streams are targeted.
- Supportive national legal framework in place providing certainty and ensuring a level playing field where there are multiple PROs in the country.
- All plastic packaging collected at households (bottles, non bottle rigids, flexibles).
- A structured and managed approach taken to the roll out of household plastics collections with sorting and recycling infrastructure considered as part of the process.
- Consideration given to sorted centre output grades to maximise recycling levels from collected plastic waste and ensure downstream demand.
- Actions already taken to increase plastic packaging recycling rates, or a clear plan is in place.

As example actions by Packaging Recycling Orgnaations (PRO) to meet the plastic packaging target can be presented the following:

- Fost Plus (Belgium) and Valorlux (Luxembourg): roll out of expanded household plastic collections to include non bottle rigids and flexibles.
- FTI (Sweden) and Fost Plus (Belgium): continued development of sorting infrastructure to maximise recovery of different polymer / formats for recycling.
- RINKI (Finland) and FTI (Sweden): expansion of household plastic collection coverage for larger apartment blocks / bring points and kerbside respectively.
- Valipac (Belgium): targeted interventions to increase commercial and industrial plastics collections and remove potential barriers, for example with respect to use of recycled content.