

Packaging Fit for Purpose

Tailored solutions to safeguard products and prevent waste

Tuesday, 6 June 2023 | European Parliament

Event Takeaways

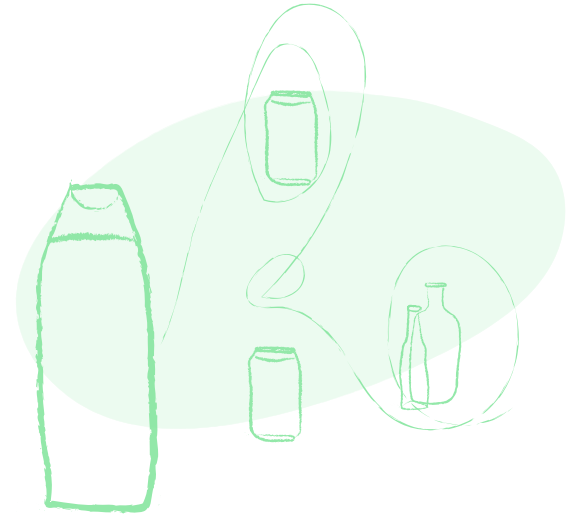


Executive Summary

On 6 June 2023, the event “Packaging Fit for Purpose” was held at the European Parliament to discuss the European Commission’s proposal for a Regulation on Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR). The main goal of the event was to foster an insightful conversation among policy makers, industry stakeholders, and packaging experts on the risks and opportunities stemming from the revision of the existing Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD), while raising awareness on the need to ensure tailored solutions for packaging in order to safeguard products, prevent waste, and promote a circular economy.

Key discussions revolved around packaging’s role in economic growth, food hygiene, and consumers’ safety, as well as the importance of packaging sustainability and waste reduction. Participants highlighted the importance of adapting solutions to the unique characteristics of different economic sectors and socio-economic realities, and emphasized the significance of packaging innovation and recycling to achieve sustainability goals.

The strong message that characterized the discussion was the call for collaboration and cooperation among policymakers, industry players, and Member States to establish an effective regulatory framework for packaging and packaging waste. In particular, it was recognized that there is no one-size-fits-all solution for packaging, and that flexibility is essential to ensure the success of the PPWR as well as preserve and enhance well-performing systems. Finally, the event highlighted the need for a well-balanced and flexible approach to the revision of the PPWD, as well as for scientific substantiation and sector-specific considerations to ensure the PPWR delivers a successful circular economy for packaging in all Member States.



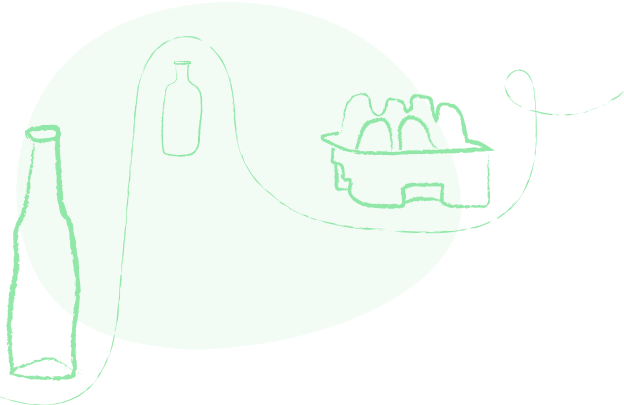
Description of the Event and Participants

The event, organised by the Permanent Representation of Italy to the EU and supported by CONAI (Consorzio Nazionale Imballaggi), witnessed broad participation from Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), Member States’ Permanent Representations to the EU, representatives from the European Commission, and numerous stakeholders from the packaging and packaging waste industry.

The participants showed high levels of engagement in the discussion, contributing to creating a positive environment of cooperation among European political parties and across Member States, along with a strong willingness to collaborate and share expertise to strengthen and ameliorate the proposed PPWR.

The speakers gathered for the event represented diverse realities in the European packaging realm, stimulating productive conversations around the following issues:

- ✓ Packaging as enabler of economic growth, food hygiene and consumers’ safety
- ✓ Packaging sustainability and waste reduction
- ✓ Packaging innovation and recycling
- ✓ How to strike the right balance and ensure the best environmental outcome



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Recommendations for Policymakers

Striking the right balance between harmonisation and sector-specific challenges :

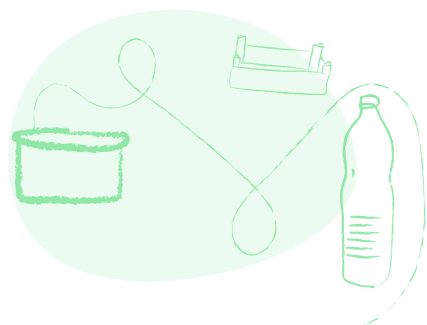
For a sensible and future-proof legislation, European complexities and specificities must be acknowledged. In this sense, considering sector-specific challenges as well as recognising the proven effectiveness of existing systems - such as for packaging waste management – is the only feasible option to reach the proposed targets.

Promoting packaging innovation and recycling :

The EU should encourage packaging innovation, allowing for more efficient designs, weight reduction, increased recyclability and the use of recycled materials to play a role in European industries. In recent years, new technologies have been developed, such as compostable and biodegradable plastics, which are recycled alongside organic food waste. Similarly, advanced sorting technologies for mechanical and chemical recycling have been deployed across the EU, which increase the availability of quality secondary raw materials, especially for food-contact packaging. To avoid hampering and limiting this ongoing innovation, heavy regulatory checks should be avoided.

DRS vs. Separate Collection? No silver bullet :

The mandatory introduction of a deposit and return scheme for single use packaging waste would duplicate environmental and economic costs where an already existing separate collection system is able to successfully manage packaging waste from a cost-efficiency and recycling effectiveness perspective. Indeed, DRS would practically replace and not complement traditional, separate collection systems for beverage packaging waste. The PPWD revision should ensure the implementation of the technology neutrality principle, thus respecting and recognising the positive results achieved by Member States through different, yet targeted approaches to their national and regional specificities.



Balanced Approach to Reuse and Recycling :

Acknowledge that both reuse and recycling play important roles in waste prevention and sustainability. The Commission's focus on reuse is neglecting the accomplishments of various Member States on packaging waste recycling as well as packaging recyclability, thereby preventing the recycling industry to contribute substantially to circular economy objectives. Moreover, multiple stakeholders highlighted the negative impact that a "blanket" reusable packaging approach could bring from an environmental as well as safety perspective. In this sense, reuse and recycling should be understood as complementary measures contributing to the achievement of a European circular economy for packaging.

Lack of rigorous environmental and socio-economic impact assessment :

Various proposed measures put forward by the European Commission for the revision of the PPWD have not been substantiated scientifically, and will negatively impact various sectors, as well as jeopardise the quality, safety and extended shelf life of fresh products. Stakeholders demanded a new impact assessment that takes into account the industry's concerns and recommendations, and prevent the implementation of biased policy measures that risk undermining European efforts to achieve a circular economy.

Packaging's crucial role to foster European economic growth :

Packaging must be recognised as an essential enabler for developing functioning supply chains of goods and services, for manufacturing and distribution sectors. In this sense, legislative initiatives that lack scientific substantiation should be avoided, as they have huge economic, social and environmental impacts on many sectors, such as pharma, agriculture and HORECA.

"We are all pursuing the same goals, the critical aspect lies in how to achieve them"