

PACKAGING AS A RESOURCE

European Union aims for recyclable packaging, better waste collection and recycling

It is 2025 and the new Directive on packaging and packaging waste ((PPWD – Directive 94/62/EC) came into force in the European Union. The directive lays down measures to prevent the production of packaging waste, and to promote reuse of packaging and recycling and other forms of recovering packaging waste. We would like to have a look at two aspects regarding plastics packaging: the recyclability and the recycled content.

Recyclable packaging (Article 6)

First and foremost, packaging must be designed for recycling, otherwise we will always fall short to achieve high recycling rates and produce high-quality recycled resins.

These are some of the measure of the PPWD:

- Over the next two years, design-for-recycling criteria will be defined and used to classify all packaging according to recyclability performance grades (A to E). These criteria will be binding from 2030.

- Depending on this classification, the license fees that manufacturers pay to place packaging on the market (i.e. the fee for collection, recycling, etc.) will also be determined from 2027. This has long been discussed for plastic packaging anyway under the term “eco-modulation”.
- Packaging that is less than 70% recyclable will be banned from 2030.
- From 2035, the EU will be strict with regard to the collection and recycling infrastructure, because the directive states, that only packaging that is recycled “at scale” may

be placed on the market. What does the EU mean by “at scale”...? Infrastructure must cover 75% of the EU population.

- Of course, there are some exceptions, such as for medical devices, baby food, hazardous goods and also for “innovative packaging”.

Minimum recycled content in plastic packaging (Article 7)

In the European Union, all contact sensitive plastic packaging has to include a minimum of 10 % recycled content as of 2030 which increases to a minimum of 25 % by 2040. For PET, contact-sensitive packaging must include a minimum of 30 % as of 2030, and a minimum of 50 % as of 2040.



Novel recycling technologies needed

Apart from PET, no recycled plastics are currently approved for contact-sensitive packaging, so it therefore makes sense for the legislation to include a re-evaluation of the proposed targets. It empowers the Commission to adjust the percentages if the required technologies are not available or only at excessive prices. As a technology developer, we bear our share of responsibility and have developed viscoZERO, a system that makes it possible to recycle material for contact-sensitive applications.



Sources:
 • “New EU rules to reduce, reuse and recycle packaging”, Press Releases Plenary session ENVI 24-04-2024 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240419IPR20589/new-eu-rules-to-reduce-reuse-and-recycle-packaging>
 • European Parliament https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2024-0318_EN.html#title2
 • IK Industrievereinigung Kunststoffverpackung, Info-Reihe Kreislaufwirtschaft (2023)

¹ Except single use beverage bottles.