

## WEBINAR SERIES:

### EU Green Deal Policies and their Relevance in Asia-Pacific

## The EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation: A source of inspiration for the Asia-Pacific region ?

### Webinar Insights

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## Context

The **EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component** and the **European Environment Bureau** held a **webinar** on the 28 May 2025 about the **new EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation**. This was part of a **series of webinars**, which seeks to explore the implications of EU policies related to Sustainable Consumption and Production for its partner countries, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. It aims to understand the goals of these policies, their relevance in specific contexts, and their implications for stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific, particularly concerning legislation that has emerged from EU policies. This Knowledge brief aims to capture the ideas shared during the webinar but is not a comprehensive analysis of the policy. It will describe the context of the webinar topic and the key ideas discussed. The webinar focused on clarity and diversity of views, rather than comprehensiveness.

## Key Messages

In February 2025, the **EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation** entered into force with new measures to prevent packaging waste, promote reuse and further tackle the environmental challenges caused by excessive packaging. It aims at significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, water use and environmental impacts from the packaging sector. In parallel, the regulation will create **opportunities for reuse and refill systems as well as for recycling**. It is an important step towards a more competitive, sustainable and circular economy for the EU and globally.

The new measures aim to develop a **single market for waste, secondary and reusable materials**; promote recycling; and reduce dependency on primary resources. They include **promoting reuse and refill as alternatives to single-use packaging**. Packaging will be more sustainable and enable consumers to reuse and sort their packaging waste more effectively, with solutions customised to the specific needs of Member States and businesses. The regulation will thus enhance resource efficiency and boost the circular use of materials.

The EU has effectively moved from recycling promotion measures to a series of far-reaching packaging design changes set as a minimum condition of market access. It addresses economic operators directly and obliges them to make changes that may fundamentally alter their entire packaging portfolio and strategy. The Regulation introduces binding measures on prevention, reuse, and recycled content while making recyclability and recycling at scale a minimum requirement.

## Introduction

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The **EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component** and the **European Environmental Bureau**, held the webinar **“The EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation: A source of inspiration for the Asia-Pacific region?”** to present the new rules, understand what they mean for the Asia-Pacific region and discuss what is expected in the coming years of implementation, what opportunities will arise from this new regulation and, more generally, from circular economy perspectives for the packaging value chain.

Marco Musso (*Deputy Policy Manager for Circular Economy at the EEB*) introduced the **background of Europe's packaging waste crisis**, which prompted the EU to revise its rules to deal with packaging waste - shifting from a limited focus on waste management and recycling towards a new EU packaging law that puts forward concrete prevention and reuse measures. **The PPWR establishes a new set of rules covering the entire packaging life cycle**, from product design to waste handling, with the objective of:

- Making all packaging placed on the EU market reusable or recyclable by 2030;
- Reinforcing requirements for packaging to ensure reuse and recycling;
- Boosting the uptake of (plastic) recycled content;
- Tackling over-packaging and reducing packaging waste.

The key provisions of the regulation, such as **packaging waste reduction and reuse targets, minimisation and empty space rules, bans on unnecessary and avoidable single-use formats, recyclability requirements**, etc., were also introduced at the beginning of the webinar.

To kickstart the panel discussion Marco Musso emphasized that:

*While recycling alone is insufficient to reduce material and carbon footprints at the scale needed to achieve our climate and environmental goals, **prevention and reuse targets offer a credible solution to the waste crisis**. The new EU packaging rules present significant opportunities for circular packaging systems. Now, **ambitious implementation and enforcement will be key to addressing the packaging waste crisis**.*

## The long-term vision of the regulation and next steps for implementation

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Ioannis Antonopoulos (*Policy Officer, DG Environment*) – who has been directly involved with the development of the PPWR proposal and now with its implementation - explained that this is the first piece of EU legislation that regulates the upper levels of the waste hierarchy: prevention and reuse. Now, the focus of the European Commission is on supporting the implementation of the new rules. He stressed the value of this new regulation:

***The Packaging Regulation will make packaging more sustainable through eco-design principles and harmonised rules**. It enables technical recyclability through consistent rules. During the implementation of the Regulation and the establishment of an EU Observatory, the EU will seek to learn from reuse practices and continuously improve.*

Another important dimension of the new EU packaging rules is **harmonisation** creating the necessary level playing field between businesses. Businesses are expected to gain significantly from increased efficiency and more predictable conditions. The regulation tackles the propagation of divergent rules in terms of labelling, recyclability, and recycled content. By harmonising these rules, the Commission aims at reducing trade barriers within the EU single market. Ioannis Antonopoulos shared that these new rules were endorsed by several businesses. The European Commission is now committed to ensuring a smooth transition towards the new rules, trying to reconcile the environmental benefits with economic feasibility. This includes the **development of secondary legislation** (between 11 and 14 secondary legislative acts are to be adopted in the next few years) to clarify rules and provide legal certainty.

## What are trade implications of the regulation?

Ioannis Antonopoulos also discussed the impacts of the regulation on third countries clarifying that the European Commission is in close contact and ongoing dialogue with third countries to provide context and clarify the new packaging rules. The European Commission organised a [public stakeholder webinar](#) in December 2024, during which several aspects were clarified. The webinar attracted a lot of attention from all around the globe.

In terms of trade implications, a key provision regarding the **equivalence for plastic recycled content** in packaging was discussed. In article 7 of the regulation a mirror clause ensures that recycled content coming from third countries must be sourced under conditions that meet equivalent standards to the EU ones. This is essential to create a level playing field among plastics recyclates. The clause is necessary to protect the environment and safeguard investments in recycling. A Commission delegated act is expected to be adopted by the end of 2026 to clarify these rules.

The European Commission also pointed out that the new harmonised rules are expected to also benefit the EU's external partners by **applying the same standards globally for all economic operators**.

## How are companies that are already adopting circular practices in the Asia-Pacific region and Europe help them fit into global value chains?

Fernando Rodríguez-Mata (*Director General of the New European Reuse Alliance*) explained how the PPWR has set a clear direction for more sustainable packaging. As a reuse organization, they welcome this regulation as it paves the way for more reuse in the coming years. He foresees that reuse, particularly for retail and e-commerce, will need to become much more prominent in the future. He also stressed that **secondary legislation will be key to providing important technical details**.

Recognising that we cannot recycle our way out of this packaging crisis, he highlighted that: **“Reuse needs to be placed at the forefront, alongside the prevention and reduction of waste. While recycling remains a useful tool, it sits at the bottom of the pyramid of options. Civil society actors from Europe and Asia are working together to define reuse norms and strengthen reuse practices on a global scale.”**

He also highlighted the challenge to reuse businesses posed by the current lack of a level playing field with single-use packaging. **Single-use packaging externalizes its costs onto society as a whole**, while Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) fees only cover a portion of these costs. Thus, EPR needs to be rethought to support prevention and reuse. Also, fiscal incentives and measures are needed to level the playing field - for example with taxes on single-use packaging.

**Wisarut Chalee**, the Founder and CEO of [Rewastec](#) presented how his company collaborates with retailers, municipalities, and universities to build closed-loop waste systems, supporting the transition from a linear to a circular economy. Rewastec is a Thai start-up established in 2021 that pioneers material innovation through plastic recycling and circular economy design by turning plastic and agricultural waste into value-added products.

He shared that: **“At Rewastec, we view the EU Packaging Waste Regulation not just as a challenge but as an opportunity to drive real circular solutions in Asia. By transforming plastics and agricultural waste into high-quality, traceable materials that meet global standards, we demonstrate how Asia can lead the transition to a circular economy – with transparency, accountability and impact.”**

Pranshu Singhal (*Founder of Karo Sambhav*) presented the perspectives of the Indian packaging value chain sharing that the country has implemented Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) waste regulations, and some changes have already begun to take place. First, certain types of collection systems are being set up at the grassroots level. There are also high-quality infrastructure plans, particularly for plastics, and a movement in terms of collection and increased uptake of recycled materials.

He also stressed that large investments are needed to provide access to collection systems and to set up high quality recycling infrastructure, stating: *“India is at the beginning of a transformative journey. We are witnessing early steps toward the harmonisation of materials, with technical specifications for recycled content starting to take shape. Some companies are beginning to eliminate packaging altogether, and both investors and brands are showing growing interest in the opportunities this shift presents. However, greater investment is still needed to develop high-quality recycling infrastructure.”*

## Conclusion

Dr Zinaida FADEEVA (Team Leader, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component) wrapped the discussion by sharing some concluding remarks:

*“Asian experiences remind us that progress toward a circular economy doesn’t always begin with legislation – it often starts with practical, on-the-ground examples. **This transition is a journey of mutual learning and exchange.** A successful Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme relies not only on legal frameworks but also on strong upstream standards and harmonised implementation – from customs procedures to waste collection systems”.*

She stressed that Extended Producer Responsibility fees should be modulated based on product features to encourage better design. The open question regards what conditions are needed for EPR systems not only to manage waste, but to truly incentivize the design of better products for prevention and reuse.

She also highlighted the **importance of systems thinking to deal with the packaging waste crisis stressing that greater investments are needed not only in collection and recycling but across the entire waste management system.** The **role of customs authorities** was also mentioned as they are important players in enforcement of the rules. Finally, emphasis was put on the need for a focus on a recyclability that maintains material integrity through multiple cycles, as material and product longevity—and the need to close the loop is a core tenet of the circular economy.

## References

- Regulation (EU) 2025/40 on packaging and packaging waste – [official legal text](#)
- European Commission – overview of packaging waste rules and implementation [https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/packaging-waste\\_en](https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/packaging-waste_en)
- [Webinar on new Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation](#)
- Rethink Plastic alliance: [Packaging and packaging waste regulation: a roadmap for implementation](#)
- [Identifying Enablers for Effective Extended Producer Responsibility \(EPR\) Systems in Asia Pacific Region: Drawing Lessons from Developed and Developing Countries in the EU and Asia](#)

### EU SWITCH-Asia grants:

- **Plastic Smart (Cambodia):** <https://www.switch-asia.eu/project/plastic-smart-cambodia/>
- **EMP-ACT (Laos):** <https://www.switch-asia.eu/project/empowering-to-act-for-circular-transition-in-plastics-in-lao-pdr-emp-act/>
- **Prevent Plastics+ (Myanmar):** <https://www.switch-asia.eu/project/prevent-plastics-pp/>

### Watch the recording [here](#)

