

WEBINAR SERIES:

EU Policies and their Relevance in Asia-Pacific

Closing the Loop: How the EU's evolving EPR policies create new opportunities for Asia-Pacific businesses

Webinar Insights



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On 9 June 2026 the [EU SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component](#) and the [European Environment Bureau](#), held the [webinar](#) “Closing the Loop: How the EU's evolving EPR policies create new opportunities for Asia-Pacific businesses” to explore how Extended Producer Responsibility policies are evolving in the European Union and which learnings they offer for countries across the Asia-Pacific region. This brief aims to capture the main concepts and ideas shared during the webinar but is not a comprehensive analysis of the policy. The webinar focused on clarity and diversity of views, rather than comprehensiveness.

Key Messages

Extended Producer Responsibility goes beyond waste collection. It is increasingly used to promote better product design, durability, reparability, and circularity. As the European Union advances eco-modulated fees and expands mandatory EPR requirements to new sectors, businesses and policy-makers in the Asia-Pacific region will need to respond to evolving rules on product information and compliance. Understanding these shifts will be key not only for maintaining access to international markets, but also to build stronger circular economy frameworks in the region.

EPR in the EU has successfully mobilised funding for waste management, but its design has often prioritised recycling over broader circular economy objectives such as prevention and reuse. Also, governance gaps persist, particularly around transparency and the monitoring of Producer Responsibility Organisations, which can undermine system efficiency.

Asia-Pacific countries have a distinct starting point, notably strong informal waste systems, requiring tailored EPR approaches rather than direct replication of EU models. In this context, EU instruments such as ecomodulation and Digital Product Passports are often perceived as compliance challenges but if they are properly integrated into the EPR system, they also can offer opportunities for supply chain transformation and circular business models.

EPR design in emerging economies must address legacy waste, ensure financial sustainability, and integrate informal workers to support a just transition.

EPR revenues must be reinvested in the local systems that make circularity possible: collection, sorting, repair/reuse, and recycling infrastructure. The success of EPR will also depend on linking traceability requirements with practical investments that strengthen local capacity and include the actors who keep circular systems working.

Introduction

Mr Sachin Joshi, Key Expert, SWITCH-Asia Policy Support Component, introduced the SWITCH-Asia Programme, its policy support component and framed the subject of Extended Producer Responsibility and the main goals of the webinar. He outlined the origins of EPR as a policy approach initially focused on end-of-life waste management and highlighted its evolution into a broader circular economy instrument. This transition includes new approaches such as eco-modulated fees, improved product design incentives, and digitalisation tools such as digital product passports.

Extended Producer Responsibility: from waste management to broader Circular Economy goals

In his opening remarks, **Marco Musso**, Deputy Policy Manager for Circular Economy, European Environmental Bureau, framed the discussion by outlining the evolution of Extended Producer Responsibility in the EU. Rooted in the polluter pays principle, EPR has become a central pillar of EU waste policy and the main mechanism to finance waste collection and recycling across multiple product streams. However, the current policy landscape remains fragmented across Member States and faces notable limitations, particularly in driving waste prevention and improved ecodesign.

Looking ahead, he pointed to ongoing reforms at EU level, including the forthcoming Circular Economy Act, aiming to strengthen harmonisation, improve governance and shift EPR from a waste management instrument towards a driver of genuine circularity, including incentives for ecodesign, prevention, reuse, and repair.

Key message: *“EPR is a key funding source for waste management activities in the EU, but it remains largely focused on end-of-life waste treatment while overlooking more resource efficient options. The upcoming CE act offers an opportunity to strengthen EPR implementation, ensuring that schemes prioritise waste prevention, support reuse and repair, and make responsible for the full lifecycle of their products.”*

EPR governance challenges and limits of recycling-focused systems

Joan Marc Simon, Founder, Zero Waste Europe, highlighted that while EPR has played a crucial role as the main funding mechanism for waste management in the EU, its design has also generated unintended consequences. He stressed that EPR systems often create policy inertia, where materials covered by EPR schemes receive attention, while others are neglected. For example, in packaging weight-based fee systems have driven lightweighting trends, encouraging shifts toward less recyclable materials such as flexible plastics.

A key concern raised was the lack of transparency and oversight of Producer Responsibility Organisations. Many operate as “black boxes,” and governments often lack the capacity to verify reported data or assess real performances. He also noted that PROs can become political actors, sometimes resisting more efficient circular solutions such as depositreturn systems.

Key message: *“EPR is a waste management tool but not necessarily a circularity tool. EPR should be about environmental protection and resource efficiency”*

Adapting EPR to diverse regional and economic contexts

Frithjof Laubinger, Environmental Economist, Circular Economy, Environment Directorate, OECD, emphasised that Asia-Pacific countries should not directly replicate EU EPR models, as they operate under very different conditions. He pointed out that many Asian economies already have functioning waste management systems dominated by the informal sector, which primarily collects highvalue materials. As a result, EPR schemes should:

- focus on low or no-value waste streams
- integrate informal actors, particularly in collection
- ensure environmental standards in processing and recycling

He also recommended a phased approach to implementation, starting with simpler systems to facilitate compliance before introducing more sophisticated mechanisms such as advanced ecomodulation.

Key message: *“EPR design in Asia could initially focus on low-value materials and integrate the informal sector using less complex regulatory systems, allowing framework complexity to scale as the system matures”*

EPR implementation and policy ambitions in the Philippines

Maria Cristina A. Francisco, Chief of Environmental Education and Information Division, Environmental Management Bureau, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Philippines, presented the experience of the Philippines, where EPR is being implemented with strong inspiration from EU frameworks.

She explained that the current system focuses on single-use plastics and it applies primarily to large enterprises. There are plans to expand scope and coverage, including stronger integration of informal actors. A major challenge is the lack of reliable data on the informal sector, which complicates policy design and monitoring.

The Philippines is also exploring fiscal incentives to support EPR implementation across stakeholders. Importantly, she outlined an ambitious target of 80% plastic waste collection by 2030.

Key message: *“Achieving our 80% recovery target by 2030 requires scaling our PRO networks. We are focusing on strengthening existing frameworks and building capacity”*

EU regulation as both barrier and opportunity

Stefanie Beiten, Managing Director and Board Member, PCX Solutions, addressed how EU circular economy policies are perceived in the Asia-Pacific region. She noted that instruments such as ecomodulation of fees and Digital Product Passports (DPPs) are often seen by Asian manufacturers as technical and operational barriers, particularly for SMEs, due to their complexity and cost implications.

However, she argued that these policies also present a strategic opportunity, as they can enhance supply chain transparency, support resource efficiency and cost saving, as well as increase resilience and sustainability.

She highlighted the potential for Asian countries to “leapfrog” the traditional evolution of EPR, by focusing from the outset on waste reduction, upstream incentives and circular product design. She cited examples such as California’s 25% source reduction target and the Philippines’ inclusion of upstream and downstream measures.

She stressed that EPR should be designed holistically, not limited to end-of-life management: *“EPR is one of the most important policy tools right now and it should include reduction goals or incentives to drive a circular economy”*

Compliance challenges and global value chain implications

Ali Asraf Khan, Sustainability and Value Chain Advisor, Embassy of Denmark, Dhaka, Bangladesh, focused on the implications of EU EPR-related regulations for global supply chains, particularly in Bangladesh. He highlighted that compliance is complex, especially for SMEs and multi-tier supply chains. In many cases companies must engage across tier 1, 2, and 3 suppliers. He also emphasised that EU regulations often have a global “trickle-down” effect, influencing production practices and sustainability standards beyond European borders.

At the same time, he identified three important opportunities for businesses in the Asia-Pacific region:

- leveraging EPR frameworks and Digital Product Passports to accelerate the green transition

- improving resource efficiency, circularity and waste management practices
- strengthening market access and competitiveness in EU markets.

He stressed the importance of collaboration across value chains and highlighted several policy challenges, including addressing legacy waste, financing high-capital recycling and circular infrastructure, ensuring transparency and effective use of EPR fees, and designing EPR systems that encourage waste prevention, reuse, and repair—not only recycling.

Key message: *“As the EU’s second-largest garment exporter, Bangladesh can gain a powerful competitive edge by adopting Digital Product Passports. Integrating this with green practices like chemical recycling and renewable energy will cement its recognition among EU partners.”*

Conclusions

The webinar illustrated that while EPR policies have proven effective in financing waste management systems, its future lies in evolving into a more comprehensive circular economy policy tool.

This shift presents both challenges and opportunities. The EU experience highlights the importance of robust governance, improved transparency, and better incentives for waste prevention, reuse / repair and product redesign, while also highlighting the limitations of approaches focused solely on recycling. For Asia-Pacific countries, the main opportunity is not in replicating EU systems, but to adapt lessons learned to local contexts and priorities. This includes integrating informal sectors, addressing legacy waste, improving value chain collaboration and embedding prevention, reuse, and repair principles from the outset in the design of EPR systems. In this way, EPR can serve as a strategic tool for organizations to enhance sustainability, improve resource efficiency, and gain competitive advantage in the market.

Resources

- Zero Waste Europe (2026), Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for waste reduction <https://zerowasteurope.eu/library/extended-producer-responsibility-waste-reduction/>
- EEB and partners within the Rethink Plastic alliance and Break Free From Plastic, Ecologic Institute (2021), Extended Producer Responsibility and Ecomodulation of Fees https://eeb.org/en_gb/library/extended-producer-responsibility-and-ecomodulation-of-fees/
- SWITCH-Asia (2025), Enabling Effective Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Systems Paper Series (Compiled): <https://www.switch-asia.eu/resource/enabling-effective-extended-producer-responsibility-epr-systems-paper-series-compiled/>
- Enablers for Effective EPR in the Asia-Pacific Region: Lessons from Philippines: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/resource/enablers-for-effective-epr-in-the-asia-paci-c-region-lessons-from-philippines/>
- Enablers for Effective EPR in the Asia-Pacific Region: Lessons from Pakistan: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/resource/enablers-for-effective-epr-in-the-asia-paci-c-region-lessons-from-pakistan/>
- Enablers for Effective EPR in the Asia-Pacific Region: Lessons from Malaysia: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/resource/enablers-for-effective-epr-in-the-asia-paci-c-region-lessons-from-malaysia/>
- Enablers for Effective EPR in the Asia-Pacific Region: Lessons from Thailand: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/resource/enablers-for-effective-epr-in-the-asia-paci-c-region-lessons-from-thailand/>
- Enablers for Effective EPR in the Asia-Pacific Region: Lessons from Kazakhstan: <https://www.switch-asia.eu/resource/enablers-for-effective-epr-in-the-asia-paci-c-region/>



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