

June 2019



Discussion points on the review of the Essential Requirements for Packaging (PPWD)

CONTEXT

The Circular Economy Package and the revision of the EU Waste Framework Directive (WFD) and Packaging & Packaging Waste Directive (PPWD) brought issues of end-of-life of products and materials to the fore. The revision above all aims to create circular economies for packaging by focussing on raising targets for waste prevention, reuse and recycling.

In this context, the review of the Essential Requirements in the PPWD responds to two political goals:

- 1) **First**, it is to promote circularity as set out in the revised PPWD and WFD, aiming to boost the prevention of packaging waste, reduce its impact on the environment and **promote high-quality recycling of used packaging materials**, while ensuring the functioning of the internal market, avoiding obstacles to trade and avoiding distortion and restriction of competition within the Union.
- 2) **Second**, the review of the Essential Requirements aims at rewarding circularity of the design of packaging. The new requirements might thus also impact the drafting of guidance on the implementation of the general minimum requirements for Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes and in particular the eco-modulation of the Extended Producer Responsibility fees.

ALUMINIUM, GLASS, STEEL

The aluminium, glass and steel sectors are top performers for recycling packaging materials. With respective rates of 73.6%, 74% and 79.5% in 2016, our industries have worked closely with European, national and even local authorities, Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes, waste management operators and last but not least, customers, brands and other societal groups, to invest in collection systems that underpin the recycling infrastructure.

Due to the nature of their chemical bonds, Permanent Materials like aluminium, glass and steel retain their intrinsic material properties, also through their re-melting process. These materials are therefore unaffected by the recycling process and can be recycled infinitely, provided they are properly collected and sorted after every use. In order to ensure a high-quality recycling process, it is, however, important to use the most suitable sorting and separation technologies.

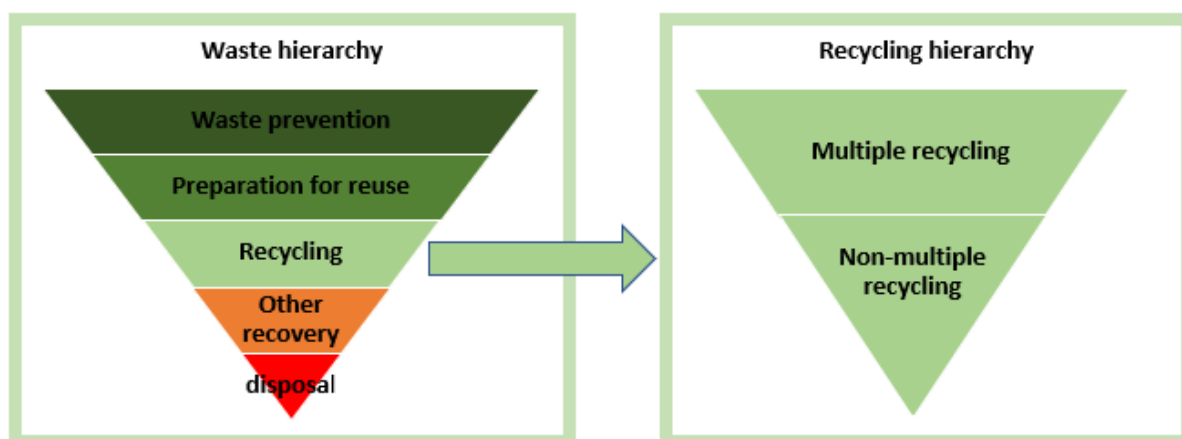
Since the start of their production, used aluminium, steel and glass have been recycled over and over again. They are infinitely recyclable without losing their main intrinsic properties and can therefore be qualified as 'permanent materials'.

1. Promote circularity as set out in the revised PPWD and WFD

In the revised PPWD, the concept of high-quality recycling is highlighted, inter alia in article 9: *“By 31 December 2020, the Commission shall examine the feasibility of **reinforcing the essential requirements** with a view to, inter alia, improving design for reuse and **promoting high-quality recycling**”.*

In article 8 of the revised WFD, the waste hierarchy and multiple recycling are linked: *“The measures shall take into account the impact of products throughout their life cycle, the **waste hierarchy** and, where appropriate, **the potential for multiple recycling**.”*

As not all forms of recycling are of equal benefit, we believe that introducing the concept of a **“recycling hierarchy”** will promote circularity, high-quality and multiple recycling.



2. Reward circularity of packaging materials

In our view, the review of the Essential Requirements is an opportunity to encourage more circular packaging and raising the ambition on high-quality recycling by introducing the distinction between multi and non-multi recyclable packaging materials.

This will help customers, consumers, authorities, brands and waste management operators to make balanced choices between sustainable packaging solutions and between the various collection, sorting and recycling options, with the final goal to maintain resources in the circular economy loop, minimising to the lowest degree possible the use of primary resources.

In this regard we can distinguish two categories or definitions of packaging material, which are:

- **“Multi recyclable”**, i.e. potential to be recycled with no loss of the main intrinsic properties:
 - The recycling process for these materials can be repeated over and over again with no loss of the main intrinsic material properties and thus maintain a circular material loop.
- **“Non-multi recyclable”**, i.e. potential to be recycled, but with significant loss of the intrinsic properties and this already after a limited number of recycling loops (1-7):
 - The recycling process for these materials leads to a gradual degradation of the original material. In other cases, the recycled material cannot substitute the primary material on a like-for-like basis. This qualifies it as a non-circular material loop and downcycling.

Making the distinction between multi and non-multi recyclable packaging material will also enable Member States and Extended Producer Responsibility Schemes **to factor in this distinction in the eco-modulation of the Extended Producer Responsibility fees.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

To achieve maintaining resources in the circular economy loop, we are putting forward the following considerations:

- 1) Like the Internal Market for packaging, the review of the Essential Requirements is a matter for all packaging materials. We support the objective laid out in the revised PPWD that the review of the Essential Requirements should address prevention of packaging waste and **promote high-quality recycling of materials through multiple recycling**

- 2) We recognise the specific issues and challenges faced by plastics packaging, as outlined in the EU Plastics Strategy. However, we strongly oppose any generic measure on packaging that is driven by a single material.
- 3) Definitions will be essential to establish a balanced approach among materials. As aluminium, glass and steel, we call for an assessment of “recyclability” and the introduction of a “recycling hierarchy” that supports the implementation of design and stewardship measures (incl. eco-modulation of fees) to reward multiple recycling loops over single recycling applications.
- 4) We call for a comprehensive review of the Essential Requirements that takes into account all materials in a balanced and non-discriminatory approach. As aluminium, glass and steel, we will strive to provide constructive input to the process.

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