

#EUCircularTalks

With EU Retailers on Packaging
and the circular economy



European
Circular Economy
Stakeholder Platform



EU Circular Talks: Packaging in the retail sector

Concept Note

October 2020

Aim & Scope

This workshop will bring together retail packaging experts with policymakers in the European Commission to discuss the current revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive and the implementation of the 2019 Directive on the single-use plastics.

The 2020 Circular Economy Action Plan envisages that by 2030 all packaging should be either reusable or recyclable. It aims at creating an enabling framework to share good practice, experience and lessons learnt on the use of packaging in the circular economy. The workshop will serve to contribute to the Commission's ongoing work and experts will be invited to describe initiatives they have established and draw conclusions as a basis for discussion in the dialogue forum of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform. The results of these EU Circular Talks (the expert workshop and online dialogues) will contribute to the retailers' implementation toolbox on Circular Packaging.

We are looking forward to a lively and open discussion.

Date & Time

19 October, 2.00 - 5.00 pm.

Structure

The workshop will be held online (using Webex) in a series of 3 sessions. Each session will be introduced by a Commission colleague (5 min), followed by interventions by retailers (10 min of 2-3 examples of best practice) and discussion (15 to 25 min).

It will focus on the challenges and opportunities faced by retailers in connection with packaging in the Circular Economy, presenting best practices, examining different success factors enabling, and the regulatory and investment barriers hampering, waste prevention, re-use and design for circularity.

2:00 - 2:30	Welcome and introduction
2:30 - 3:15	Session 1 – Waste prevention: finding alternative to current use of packaging
3:15 - 3:25	Break
3:25 - 3:55	Session 2 – Reusable packaging and deploying reuse models
3:55 - 4:55	Session 3 – Design for circularity: creating safe and circular packaging
4:55 - 5:00	Wrap up and conclusion

Agenda

Moderator: Isabelle Maurizi, Head of Sustainability and Environment - EuroCommerce

Welcome and introduction

- **Mattia Pellegrini**, Head of Unit - DG Environment
- **Christian Verschueren**, Director-General - EuroCommerce
- **Amy Nicholass** - Eunomia; *'Progress on the impact assessment of the packaging and packaging waste directive'*
- **Michael Kuhndt** – Executive Director of the Collaborating Centre on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSCP) ; *"Club for sustainable packaging solutions"*

Using consumer insights and needs as a starting point, Michael will look at the main characteristics

for eco-designed packaging in the Circular Economy and how retailers can engage with both suppliers and consumers to promote circular packaging. He will provide suggestions/best practice examples based on its cooperation with major retailers. Michael is a member of the European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform and the Consumer Insight Action Panel is a contribution to the platform.

Session 1: Waste prevention: Finding alternatives to current use of packaging

Policy officer (policy introduction)

Valentina Bertato, DG Environment - European Commission

Retail perspective

Julia Riss - Head of EU affairs - Brussels Office - Rewe Group

Fernando Venture - Head of Efficiency and Innovation Environmental Projects – Environmental department - Jeronimo Martins

Plastics and packaging have been subject to a high number of critics in the last years, to which retailers have responded by proposing alternatives. Alternatives to packaging imply reduction and even- removal of unnecessary packaging, use of more renewable resources for packaging production, and substitution of virgin, fossil-based, sources, with bio-based sources.

Yet, packaging fits several purposes (hygiene, reduction of food waste and prolonging shelf life, safety of products and their protection during transport, information to consumer, branding...) and there is a fine line between what can be considered as necessary and unnecessary packaging. In the latter case, retailers have shown their commitment to find alternative sources to the current form of packaging.

Hence the following questions and barriers to address and overcome:

- One of the core purposes of packaging is to ensure the safety of products: what are the measures to consider when removing packaging altogether?
- What do you consider to be “unnecessary” packaging? Do you think regulation should be strengthened in this regards?
- Has there been a change in the role of packaging during the COVID-19 crisis?
- What type of investment are now needed to reduce the use of packaging in retail?
- What regulatory barriers can be identified and suggestions to overcome them?
- What are the experiences of Zero Waste Shops across Europe and how can these experiences be used in retail in general?

Sessions 2: Reusable packaging and deploying reuse models

Policy officer (policy introduction)

Maja Desgrees du Lou, DG Environment, European Commission

Retail perspective

Romain Badie, Loop project manager & CSR team member - Carrefour

The European Commission has worked to promote and develop the recycling of products and packaging. The Waste Framework Directive and the more specific Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive set the basis for increasing the recycling of packaging, in particular via ambitious recycling targets, leaving Member States and local actors responsible for the actual functioning of their waste management systems. With 2018 revision of the waste legislation, EU legislators have introduced a set of more concrete rules to promote packaging

reuse, thus requiring Member States to take measures to encourage the increase in the share of reusable packaging and systems to reuse packaging in an environmentally sound manner and in conformity with the Treaty. This will need to be without compromising food hygiene or the safety of consumers. Furthermore, Member States are allowed to account for a 5% share of the reusable sales packaging in accounting of their recycling targets. Reuse is one of the ways to reduce packaging waste generation.

Numbers in this regards are alarming, as packaging waste is increasing despite recognisable efforts to use less materials through the general light-weighting trend in packaging. In 2017, the generation of packaging waste reached a record 173 kg per capita, the highest level ever, which corresponds to 8.5% growth of packaging put on the market in 10 years. At the same time, however, the share of reusable packaging has drastically declined in all EU Member States. Retailers have shown individual initiatives to close the loop and engage with consumer to develop reusable business models, as a possible way to reduce the generation of packaging and packaging waste.

Hence the following questions:

- What can we learn from local and private initiatives to reduce packaging and packaging waste and resort to more reusable packaging and business models?
- What rules should be implemented to deploy a single market of waste?
- What are the success factors and barriers when deploying reuse schemes for packaging?
- Can you share some best practice examples?
- Safety challenge: What would a reusable packaging imply in terms of safety and liability?
- What is the role of Deposit and Return systems in the deployment of reuse models?
- What is the role of digitalization in the deployment of the reuse models?

Session 3: Designing circular packaging and safe by design

Policy officer (policy introduction)

Bastiaan Schupp - DG SANTE, European Commission

Retail perspective

Götz Brandau, Head of Brussels Office - Lidl

Stina Wallström, Director Regulatory Affairs - Ikea range and supply

Ana Alves, Head of Private Label - Sonae MC

Malene Teller Blume, Quality Manager - Coop DK

The volume of materials used for packaging is constantly increasing and reached 173 kg per inhabitant in 2017. With 2018 revision of the waste legislation, EU legislators mandated the Commission to reinforce the packaging essential requirements with a view to, among others, improving design for reuse and promoting high quality recycling. The European Commission is currently in the process of assessing impacts of various policy options, which include also possible waste prevention measures, green public procurement and recycled content measures. In addition, the Commission has launched or is participating and supporting several regulatory and voluntary initiatives to promote the uptake of recycled content, in particular for plastics, as well as eco-design products for better reuse, repurpose and recycling. The 2020 Circular Economy Action Plan is based on this cross-sectoral approach for more circular and sustainable products. Last but not least, DG ENV is currently working on a Chemical Strategy for Sustainability, encompassing safe by design, to avoid hazardous substances entering the product loops, one example being PFAS.

Ahead of, and in parallel to this legislation, and working in partnership with suppliers, retailers have launched eco-designed packaging to reduce the environmental impact of their own-brand products. Retail companies have looked at criteria to contribute to **packaging design for circularity**.

Based on their experience the following questions could be raised:

- How would you define a sustainable, eco-designed packaging?
- What are the main drivers and barriers to upscaling the eco-designed packaging?

Do you agree that the packaging complexity and/or the complexity of packaging materials used should be reduced and what would you suggest in this regard?

- What would sustainable packaging imply in terms of food contact materials? How to avoid hazardous substances? Do retailers have access to information on chemical composition of packaging and the presence of hazardous substances?
- What is the role of the digitalization (e.g. watermarking technology) and other technological advances for upscaling more eco-designed packaging?
- What are the alternatives to single-use plastic packaging? How can we measure the environmental impact of such alternatives and is non-plastics always greener?
- One of the core purposes of packaging is to ensure the safety and hygiene of products: what are the measures to consider when choosing an alternative material?
- What are the market conditions/barriers to upscaling the use of alternative materials?
- What are in your opinion the necessary conditions and the environmentally beneficial applications for compostable packaging?

Wrap up and conclusion

- **Maria Nikolopoulou**, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee
- **Isabelle Maurizi**, Head of Sustainability and Environment - EuroCommerce

Organisers

ECESP: The [European Circular Economy Stakeholder Platform](#) is a joint initiative by the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee to implement the circular economy. The platform brings together stakeholders active in the broad field of the circular economy in Europe.

Through its website, the platform offers a virtual open space that aims at promoting Europe's transition to a circular economy. As a "network of networks", it facilitates dialogue among stakeholders and help disseminate activities, information, and good practices on the circular economy.

Stakeholders can contribute to the Platform by participating in the annual conference and by interacting and/or contributing to the website with good practices, knowledge, strategies and events.

The members of the Coordination Group contribute to the annual Stakeholder Conference, accelerating or facilitating the transition by cooperating in setting up specific activities with their networks, and overall enrichment of the website content with strategies, events, publications or good practices.

EuroCommerce: [EuroCommerce](#) is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 31 countries and 5.4 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale provide a link between producers and 500 million European consumers over a billion times a day. It generates 1 in 7 jobs, providing a varied career for 29 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.