

Packaging and packaging waste (from 2026)

SUMMARY OF:

[Regulation \(EU\) 2025/40 on packaging and packaging waste](#)

WHAT IS THE AIM OF THE REGULATION?

Regulation (EU) 2025/40 sets out **sustainability and labelling requirements** for packaging throughout its life cycle, including production, use and waste management. It aims:

- to **prevent unnecessary packaging** and promote **reuse, refill and recycling**;
- to **harmonise national measures** to avoid trade barriers and competition distortions;
- to **contribute to the [circular economy](#) and [climate neutrality](#)** by 2050.

KEY POINTS

- The [regulation](#) covers **all packaging and packaging waste**, regardless of material or origin (industrial, retail, household, etc.), complementing existing [European Union](#) (EU) laws on waste management.
- Packaging complying with the regulation can be **freely marketed across the EU**. EU [Member States](#) cannot impose additional national requirements that conflict with the regulation unless expressly provided otherwise.
- Packaging must be designed so as to **minimise the presence of harmful substances**, to protect human health and the environment. All packaging must be recyclable, meaning that it must be:
 - designed for material recycling;
 - able to be collected, sorted and recycled at scale when it becomes waste – the requirement for packaging to be recycled at scale enters into force in 2035.
- The regulation establishes a system of recyclability performance grades, applicable from 2030, and introduces stricter obligations on recyclability from 2038.

- **Plastic packaging** must contain minimum recycled content recovered from post-consumer plastic waste, with certain exceptions for pharmaceutical packaging, food packaging for infants and young children, medical devices, transport of hazardous goods and compostable plastics.
- **Compostable packaging** must meet industrial composting standards. Member States may require compostability for specific packaging types if appropriate infrastructure exists.
- Packaging must be designed to **minimise weight and volume** while maintaining functionality. However, marketing or consumer acceptance do not justify additional packaging weight or volume.
- Packaging that aims to **increase the perceived volume of the product** (e.g. double walls, false bottoms) is prohibited unless protected by design rights or trademarks.
- **Reusable packaging** must:
 - be designed for multiple rotations in normal use;
 - meet safety, hygiene and recyclability requirements;
 - allow for labelling and refilling without compromising product quality.

Obligations

- **Producers are responsible for the entire life cycle of their packaging**, including waste management. Their extended producer responsibility must:
 - cover the necessary costs of collection, sorting and recycling;
 - incentivise eco-design and recyclability through modulated fees;
 - ensure financial transparency and accountability.
- **Member States** must:
 - progressively reduce the amount of packaging waste generated per capita, with targets set for 2030, 2035 and 2040;
 - ensure adequate infrastructure for the separate collection, sorting and recycling of all packaging waste;
 - achieve a 65 % recycling rate by 2025 for all packaging waste, increasing to 70 % by 2030, with specific targets for different materials;
 - ensure that deposit-return systems for single-use plastic or metal beverage containers are established by 2029, unless they already reach a high separate collection rate.
- **Manufacturers and importers** must:
 - conduct [conformity assessments](#) (manufacturers) or ensure that a conformity assessment has been carried out (importers), and maintain technical documentation for a period of five years, or 10 years in the case of reusable packaging;
 - issue an EU declaration of conformity (manufacturer), stating that their packaging meets the regulation's requirements;

- ensure proper labelling and documentation;
- take corrective action (e.g. recall or withdraw) if non-compliance is suspected and inform authorities.
- **Suppliers** must provide manufacturers with all necessary information and documentation to demonstrate compliance.
- **Distributors** must verify that packaging complies with EU rules and that manufacturers/importers have met their obligations, providing relevant information to authorities upon request.
- **Fulfilment service providers** must ensure that handling, warehousing and dispatching processes do not compromise packaging compliance.
- **Packaging waste management operators** must annually report packaging waste data to authorities and producers to support extended producer responsibility obligations.

Combating excessive packaging

- By 2030, economic operators must ensure that the grouped, transport and e-commerce packaging they fill does not exceed 50 % empty space.
- Sales packaging must minimise empty space while maintaining functionality.
- From 2030, certain packaging formats listed in Annex V are prohibited. Member States may maintain pre-2025 restrictions on non-listed materials. Microenterprises may be exempt from the ban on single-use packaging for foods and beverages consumed within the premises if alternatives are not feasible.
- The new rules introduce restrictions on single-use plastic packaging for:
 - single-use films or wrap used to group goods at the point of sale to encourage consumers to buy more than one product;
 - pre-packed fruit and vegetables of less than 1.5 kg;
 - food and drink filled and consumed within hotels, bars and restaurants;
 - individual portions of condiments, sauces, coffee creamer and sugar;
 - small, single-use cosmetic and toiletry products used in hotels;
 - most very lightweight plastic bags.
- Operators introducing reusable packaging must ensure a system is in place for its collection and reuse.
- Operators using reusable packaging must participate in reuse systems and ensure packaging is reconditioned before further reuse.
- Operators offering refill options must inform consumers about container types that they can use, hygiene standards and safety rules. From 2030, large retailers must endeavour to dedicate 10 % of sales area to refill stations.
- By 2030, 40 % of transport packaging must be reusable, increasing to an aspirational target of 70 % by 2040.

- By 2030, 10 % of grouped packaging must be reusable, increasing to an aspirational target of 25 % by 2040.
- By 2030, beverage distributors must ensure 10 % of products are in reusable packaging, rising to 40 % by 2040.
- Exemptions apply for microenterprises, small beverage distributors and specific sectors. Under certain conditions, Member States have the possibility to exclude additional sectors, allow distributors to form pools, and exempt those operating on small islands or in low population-density areas.
- Restaurants and cafes providing takeaway food or beverages must:
 - allow consumers to bring their own containers for takeaway food and beverages, at no additional cost, by 2027;
 - offer reusable packaging for takeaway items, at no extra cost, by 2028.

Plastic carrier bags

Member States must ensure that annual consumption of lightweight plastic carrier bags does not exceed 40 bags per capita by 2025.

- Measures to achieve this target may include marketing restrictions, economic incentives and national reduction targets.
- Very lightweight bags are banned unless used for hygiene or to prevent food waste. Member States may decide whether such very lightweight bags must be compostable in their territories.

FROM WHEN DOES THE REGULATION APPLY?

The regulation entered into force on 11 February 2025 and applies from 12 August 2026.

BACKGROUND

For further information, see:

- [Packaging waste](#) (European Commission).
- [Proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on packaging and packaging waste](#) (European Commission).

MAIN DOCUMENT

Regulation (EU) [2025/40](#) of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 December 2024 on packaging and packaging waste, amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and Directive (EU) 2019/904, and repealing Directive 94/62/EC (OJ L, 2025/40, 22.1.2025).

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