

The revised EU rules on packaging and packaging waste - will they bring the much needed focus on prevention?

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There is a need to address the boundaries of resource use regarding all packaging materials - as all these materials come with their respective impacts. Our current production and unsustainable consumption patterns are clearly reflecting the linear economy model which creates continuous demand for virgin raw materials and endless waste. Packaging is one of the main users of virgin materials (40% of plastics and 50% of paper used in the EU is destined for packaging) and accounts for 36 % of municipal solid waste.

The proposal of revised EU rules on packaging and packaging waste cover both packaging design and packaging waste management. The waste prevention targets in the Commission's proposal are however still too low considering that packaging volumes have increased by 20% over the last decade. While EU rules on packaging cover all types of packaging and packaging waste placed on the European market, some measures in the proposal address plastic only. On the positive side, the PPWR as proposed by the European Commission, shows for the first time a good overall ambition to encourage prevention through mandatory reuse targets for a wide range of packaging types, in line with the waste hierarchy.

Finally, in order for packaging to be truly sustainable, it needs to be safe for both human and environmental health, and the PPWR should therefore carefully consider consumer safety in the context of the proposal.

To conclude, although the proposal is going in the right direction, it needs to be more ambitious if the EU is willing to achieve the EU Green Deal goals.