

Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR)

PPWR is a new EU regulation designed to reduce packaging waste and improve circularity across Europe. If you sell products in or into the EU, PPWR will affect you. It includes not just boxes and bags, but hangtags, labels, cords and e-commerce outer packaging too.

The regulation came into force on 11 February 2025, however it will mainly be applied from August 2026.

The overarching goal is clear: All packaging placed on the EU market must be recyclable or reusable by 2030

According to the European Commission, packaging accounts for around 36 percent of solid waste in the EU, with packaging waste per person increasing by almost 25 percent between 2009 and 2021. This regulation is part of the EU's broader Circular Economy Action Plan and Green Deal.

Key dates:

- Regulation effective date: 11 February 2025
- Main application date: From August 2026

What types of packaging are included?

- Product and gift packaging
- Inner and outer packaging including poly bags
- Hangtags and labels
- Cords, strings and fastenings
- E-commerce and transport packaging

Recyclability requirements by 2030

By 2030, all packaging must be practically recyclable.

ways in which brands can make improvements to become PPWR compliant include:

- Avoid using foil finishes, metallised layers and lamination
- Minimise the use of mixed materials that cannot be easily separated
- Rethink complex composites and decorative coatings

Studies referenced by organisations such as WRAP, a global non-governmental organisation (NGO) tackling the causes of the climate crisis, and ISO show that mixed-material packaging is one of the biggest barriers to effective recycling, even when individual components are technically recyclable.

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Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) continued...

Design for recycling

PPWR places a strong emphasis on designing for recycling. This means packaging should be designed from the outset to work within the existing recycling infrastructure.

Best-practice principles include:

- Using mono-materials wherever possible
- Keeping ink coverage low, particularly on paper and board
- Using adhesives that are compatible with recycling processes
- Avoiding unnecessary layers and finishes

Certifications such as FSC and standards referenced by the Higg Index consistently highlight that material simplicity improves recyclability and reduces environmental impact.

Minimum recycled content requirements

PPWR introduces a mandatory minimum recycled content targets for plastic packaging.

By 2030 non-food plastic packaging must contain at least 35 percent post-consumer recycled (PCR) content.

This aligns with existing frameworks such as GRS (Global Recycled Standard), which verifies recycled content and chain of custody. Brands already working with GRS-certified materials will be in a stronger position for PPWR.

Early engagement with suppliers is key to securing compliant materials are utilised.

Waste prevention and packaging reduction

PPWR also includes strict waste prevention measures.

Key requirements include:

- Minimising packaging volume and weight
- Eliminating unnecessary packaging components
- For e-commerce packaging, void space must not exceed 50%

Research from universities such as the [University of Cambridge](#) and data cited by government bodies show that excess void space significantly increases transport emissions and material waste. This makes packaging optimisation both an environmental and commercial opportunity.

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Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) continued...

Labelling requirements from 2028

From 2028, all packaging placed on the EU market must carry harmonised recycling and disposal symbols. This means:

- Consistent labelling across EU countries
- Clear guidance for consumers on how to dispose of packaging
- Reduced reliance on country-specific icons and instructions

Clear labelling supports higher recycling rates, something repeatedly highlighted by organisations such as Oeko-Tex, and ISO in consumer behaviour studies.

Brands should plan ahead to update artwork, gain approvals as these, as well as stock cycles, can take significant time.

Substances of concern and restricted materials

PPWR also addresses chemical safety in packaging. There will be increased restrictions on substances of concern, including:

- Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS)
- Certain heavy metals
- Some inks and coatings

In practice, brands should avoid:

- Metallic coatings
- Soft-touch varnishes
- Decorative finishes that interfere with recycling or introduce harmful substances

These changes align with broader chemical safety initiatives referenced by bodies such as Oeko-Tex and Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH), reinforcing the link between packaging, human health and environmental impact.

What brands should be doing now

The practical next steps for brands include:

- Auditing all current packaging components, including tags and labels
- Identifying mixed materials, coatings and non-recyclable elements
- Engaging suppliers on mono-material and PCR alternatives
- Reviewing e-commerce packaging for void space compliance
- Planning artwork updates for future labelling requirements

According to Sedex data on supply chain risk, early engagement and transparency significantly reduce compliance and reputational risks when regulations change.

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Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) continued...

How Weavabel can help

At Weavabel, we support brands with packaging and trim solutions that balance design, sustainability and compliance.

By understanding the regulation and making informed material and design choices, brands can:

- Reduce future compliance risk
- Improve recyclability and circularity
- Strengthen sustainability credentials with customers and partners

PPWR is not just another regulation. It is a clear signal that packaging design is changing for good. Brands that act now will be better placed for 2030 and beyond.

If you would like support reviewing your packaging in light of PPWR, our team is here to help.

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Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) continued...

PPWR countdown to 2030: Summary of the key milestones

This timeline outlines the critical deadlines for businesses to ensure their packaging complies with the EU Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) before the major 2030 requirements take effect.

- **Substance restrictions (August 2026):** New, lower concentration limits for heavy metals (lead, cadmium, mercury, hexavalent chromium) apply.
- **PFAS ban (August 2026):** Packaging containing PFAS above specified limits is prohibited.

2026-2027: Laying the groundwork

These dates are for the development of rules that will define future compliance. Businesses should monitor these developments closely.

- **February 2026:** Development begins for harmonized standards on compostable packaging.
- **August 2026:** Deadline for the EU to adopt rules for a harmonized labelling system (including QR code specifications).
- **December 2026:** Development begins on the methodology for calculating recycled content in plastic packaging.
- **February 2027:** Development begins on harmonized standards for packaging minimization calculations.

2028: New design and information requirements

- **February 2028:** Mandatory composability standards come into effect for specific items (e.g., sticky labels on fruit/veg, tea bags). All other "biodegradable" packaging must be designed for recycling.
- **August 2028:** Harmonized material label is mandatory on all packaging to help consumers sort their waste. Plastic packaging must also bear a label indicating its recycled content percentage.

2029: Focus on reusability

- **February 2029:** All reusable packaging must bear a specific label informing consumers it is reusable.
- **February 2029:** Reusable sales packaging must be clearly distinguished from single-use packaging at the point of sale.

2030: The "Big Bang" of mandatory requirements

This is the first major deadline for core environmental design rules. From 1st January 2030:

- **Mandatory Recyclability:** All packaging placed on the EU market must be designed for material recycling and meet recyclability performance grades A, B, or C.
- **Minimum Recycled Content:** Stricter, mandatory targets for recycled plastic in packaging take effect 35% for all other plastic packaging.
- **Packaging Minimization:** All packaging must be designed with minimum weight and volume. Filled packaging (grouped, transport, e-commerce) must have a maximum empty space ratio of 50%.
- **Ban on Single-Use Plastics:** Specific single-use plastic packaging formats are banned.

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